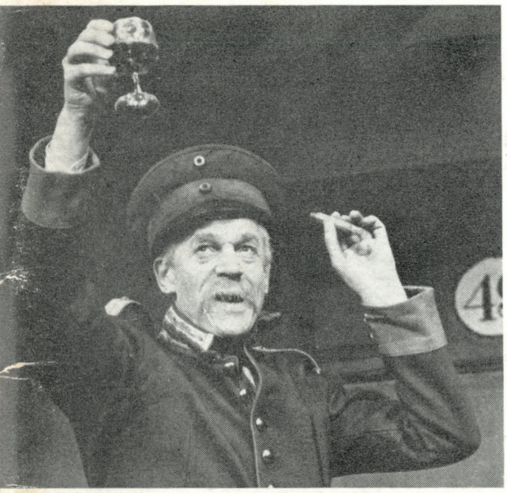
35p january 1972

playtext: Alan Bennett's Getting On

plays and players



the critics' survey 1971

Duncan C. Weldon and Paul Elliott for
TRIUMPH THEATRE PRODUCTIONS Ltd., present

PRINCE OF WALES THEATRE, LONDON

ERIC SYKES JIMMY EDWARDS

in

BIG BAD MOUSE

by Philip King and Falkland Cary

with

JOAN YOUNG

VICTORIA PALACE, LONDON

DESMOND WALTER-ELLIS
FRANK MALBOROUGH
JOHN CLIVE
DEBORAH WATLING

in

THE WIZARD OF OZ

with

TONY SIMPSON

Directed by BRYAN WOLFE

PRINCESS THEATRE, TORQUAY

AMI MACDONALD LIONEL BLAIR
JACKIE (Mr TV) PALLO
AVRIL ANGERS

in

GOLDILOCKS & 3 BEARS

FORUM THEATRE, BILLINGHAM

HELEN SHAPIRO
McDONALD HOBLEY
TOM MENNARD
SANDY LANE

in

GOODY TWO SHOES

NEW THEATRE, HULL

BOBBY DENNIS

in

CINDERELLA

with

DIANE RAYNOR

and

BRUCE TRENT

WYVERN THEATRE, SWINDON

in association with the
WYVERN ART TRUST

TOAD OF TOAD HALL

by A. A. Milne

Directed by HUGH GOLDIE

THEATRE ROYAL, BRIGHTON

RICHARD TODD

in

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

with

MERVYN JOHNS
PATRICK BARR

and

ELIZABETH SELLARS

Directed by CHRISTOPHER DENYS

PLAYHOUSE, BOURNEMOUTH

WILFRED PICKLES

in

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

with

BARRY SINCLAIR

Directed by PETER WILKINS

plays and players

January 1972 Vol 19 No 4 Issue No 220 Founded 1953

EDITED BY PETER ROBERTS

ASSISTANT EDITORS — ANNE TAYLER — PETER ANSORGE

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OXFORD PLAYHOUSE COMPANY

at the Oxford Playhouse (Box Office: 47133)

December 20th—January 8th

the pantomime for ALL the family

ALADDIN

words and music by Frank Hauser
directed and choreographed by Leo Kharibian
designed by Alix Stone

company includes: Peter Ardran, Norman Comer, Gerry Davis, Sharon Gurney, Gillian Hayes, Merdelle Jordine, David King, Olga Lowe, Kevork Malikyan, Pamela Manson, Leslie Meadows, Frank Middlemass, Ray Skipp, John Tordoff

January 17th for a season

William Shakespeare's

ROMEO and JULIET

directed by Edgar Wreford

company includes: Maggie Jones, Felicity Kendal

THE PLAYHOUSE, BEAUMONT STREET, OXFORD OX1 2LP

PLAYGUIDE

RECOMMENDED

Play: Butley
Revival: A Midsummer Night's Dream
American Musical: Showboat
British Musical: Canterbury Tales
Whodunnit: Sleuth

TEN AT THE TOP

Longest runs in London on January 1

The Mousetrap	7,925
There's a Girl in my Soup	2,305
Canterbury Tales	1,567
Hair	1,357
Magic of the Minstrels	1,279
The Secretary Bird	1,276
Pyjama Tops	929
Sleuth	774
Abelard and Heloise	681
Danny La Rue at the Palace	675

THEATRES

ADELPHI Showboat
ALDWYCH Royal Shakespeare Company: Much Ado to December 23. Then: The Balcony; Exiles; The Man of Mode; Midsummer Night's Dream.
AMBASSADORS The Mousetrap
APOLLO Charley's Aunt (mats: The Owl and the Pussycat)
CAMBRIDGE West of Suez
COLISEUM Peter Pan (mats only, Dec 26 to Jan 22)
COMEDY There's a Girl in my Soup
CRITERION Butley
DRURY LANE The Great Waltz
DUCHESS The Dirtiest Show in Town
DUKE OF YORK'S The Man Most Likely to . . . (mats: Toad of Toad Hall)
FORTUNE Suddenly At Home
GARRICK Don't Just Lie There, Say Something!
GLOBE The Changing Room
GREENWICH Jack and the Beanstalk (December 27 to January 23)
HAMPSTEAD His Monkey Wife (December 20 to January 17)
HAYMARKET A Voyage Round My Father
HER MAJESTY'S Ambassador
LYRIC How the Other Half Loves
MAY FAIR The Philanthropist (mats: Sooty's Christmas Show)
MERMAID Dick Turpin (to January 22). Late-night show: Love . . . Love . . . Love . . .
NEW National Theatre Company: Danton's Death; Long Day's Journey into Night; Tyger
OLD VIC National Theatre Company: The Good-Natured Man; Merchant of Venice; National Health
OPEN SPACE The Four Little Girls
PALACE: Danny La Rue at the Palace
PALLADIUM Cinderella (opens December 21)
PHOENIX Canterbury Tales (mats: Winnie the Pooh)
PICCADILLY Straight Up
PRINCE OF WALES Big Bad Mouse
QUEEN'S Getting On
ROUNDHOUSE Godspell
ROYALTY Oh! Calcutta!
ST MARTIN'S Sleuth
SAVOY The Secretary Bird
SHAFTESBURY Hair
SHAW The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner (mats only)
STRAND No Sex, Please—We're British
THEATRE UPSTAIRS Sylveste (December 28 to January 25)
VAUDEVILLE Move Over, Mrs Markham
VICTORIA PALACE Magic of the Minstrels (mats: The Wizard of Oz)
WHITEHALL Pyjama Tops
WYNDHAM'S Abelard and Heloise
YOUNG VIC Paper Bag Players (December 20 to January 8); Romeo and Juliet; Endgame; Oedipus; Waiting for Godot

FIRST NIGHTS

December 20—His Monkey Wife
Hampstead Theatre Club, Swiss Cottage Centre, NW3. 722 9301
A new Sandy Wilson musical, adapted from the novel by John Collier. The central character is Emily, a chimpanzee (played by June Ritchie). Basil Coleman directs and choreography is by David Drew.

December 30—Love . . . Love . . . Love . . .
Mermaid, Puddle Dock, Blackfriars, EC4. 248 7656
Barrie Ingham's solo performance, presented as a late-night show—an exploration of man's most treasured emotion.

January 12—Trelawny
Theatre Royal, Bristol. OBR2 24388
The gala reopening of the refurbished home of the Bristol Old Vic is with the premiere of Aubrey Woods' adaptation of the Pinero play, with music and lyrics by Julian Slade. Hayley Mills (in the name part), Ian Richardson and Timothy West head the company.

January 26—Alpha Beta
Royal Court, Sloane Square, SW1. 730 1745
Albert Finney and Rachel Roberts co-star in a new play by E A Whitehead, the Court's resident dramatist. Anthony Page directs

CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENT

Pantomimes:
Cinderella at the London Palladium (437 7373) with Ronnie Corbett as Buttons, Clodagh Rodgers as Cinderella and Terry Scott and Julian Orchard as the Ugly Sisters, opens December 21. *Jack and the Beanstalk* at the Greenwich Theatre (858 7755), written and directed by Alan Vaughan-Williams with Ian Lavender as Jack, December 27 to January 23. *Robinson Crusoe* at Wembley Stadium (902 1234), this year's ice show, has Charlie Cairoli and his famous musical clowns, December 18 to March 4.

Plays:
Alice in Wonderland at the Ashcroft, Croydon (688 9291), with Alison Fraser as Alice and Patricia Burke as the Queen of Hearts, December 27 to January 15. *Charley's Aunt* at the Apollo (437 2663), starring Tom Courtenay for a limited season. *Dick Turpin* at the Mermaid (248 7656), with Gay Raymond as Turpin, December 14 to January 22. *The Owl and the Pussycat* at the Apollo (437 2663), David Wood's adaptation of Edward Lear's verses and stories, mornings and matinees only until January 15. *Peter Pan* at the Coliseum (836 3161), entirely new production directed by Robert Helpmann with Dorothy Tutin as Peter and Eric Porter as Captain Hook, matinees only from Boxing Day to January 22. *The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner* at the Shaw (388 1394), another David Wood story for young children, two matinees daily until January 15. *Toad of Toad Hall,* two productions this year: at the Duke of York's (836 5122), with Derek Smith as Toad, Richard Goolden as Mole and James Cairncross as Badger, for matinees only from December 20 to January 15, and at Stratford-upon-Avon by the RSC (0789 2271), with Peter Woodthorpe as Toad, Michael Williams as Mole, Jeffery Diench as Ratty and Tony Church as Badger, three-week season from January 3. *Winnie-the-Pooh* at the Phoenix (836 8611), with Jimmy Thompson as Pooh and Frank Thornton as Eeyore, matinees only from December 16 to January 15. *The Wizard of Oz* at the Victoria Palace (834 1317), with Deborah Watling in the Judy Garland role of Dorothy, mornings and matinees only from December 24 to January 22.

Miscellaneous
The Paper Bag Players at the Young Vic (928 7616), the famous New York troupe with entertainment for children from 5 to 8 years, December 20 to January 8. *Sooty's Christmas Show* at the May Fair (629 3036), from December 20, mornings and matinees only.

PLAYS RUNNING

check times with daily press

PLAYS

ABELARD AND HELOISE (*Wyndham's,* 836 3028) Ronald Millar's play about the tragic 12th century love story of Abelard, the scholar and divine, and the 17-year old convent girl. Corin Redgrave and Sheila Ruskin now play the lovers in Robin Phillips' production. Mon-Fri 7.45, Sat 5 & 8.15, mat Thur 2.45. Running time: 2¾ hours.

THE BALCONY (*Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldwych,* 836 6404) First public performance in this country of this Genet work, directed by Terry Hands and with Brenda Bruce as Madame Irma, Estelle Kohler as Carmen and Barry Stanton as the Chief of Police. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30. In repertoire from January 1

THE CHANGING ROOM (*Globe,* 437 1592) David Storey's new play, directed by Lindsay Anderson and designed by Jocelyn Herbert, has its characters drawn from a Northern Rugby League team and its manager and staff. Transferred from the Royal Court. Evs 8, Sats and Dec 27 at 5.15 and 8.40.

DANTON'S DEATH (*National Theatre, New* 836 3878) Buchner's classic on the French Revolution, directed by Jonathan Miller with Christopher Plummer as Danton, Charles Kay as Robespierre and Ronald Pickup as St Just. In repertoire, evs 7.30, mats 3. Curtain: 10.05.

DICK TURPIN (*Mermaid,* 248 7656) A revival of last year's successful adaptation by Anthony Loynes and Ron Pember of the famous adventure story, directed by Sally Miles, with Gary Raymond in the name part. Daily 2 & 5 pm, Sats also 10.30 am. To January 22.

EXILES (*Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldwych,* 836 6404) Harold Pinter's 1970 Mermaid production of James Joyce's only play, a study of the problem of sexual morality. Vivien Merchant and John Wood repeat their previous performances, and the cast is now completed by T P McKenna and Estelle Kohler. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30. Curtain: 10.20. In repertoire from January 6.

THE FOUR LITTLE GIRLS (*Open Space,* 580 4970) The world premiere of Pablo Picasso's play, translated by Sir Roland Penrose and presented in 'a fantasy-terrain' which necessitates the complete reconstruction of the auditorium. A large-scale Happening, and the most expensive production by The Open Space so far.

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT (*National Theatre, New,* 836 3878) Laurence Olivier plays James Tyrone with Constance Cummings as his wife in Michael Blakemore's production of Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical classic. In repertoire, evs 7, mats 2.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH (*National Theatre, Old Vic,* 928 7616) Peter Nichols' brilliantly observed tragi-comedy of life in a hospital ward. Michael Blakemore's production has a cast including Jim Dale, Bill Fraser, Charles Kay and Anna Carteret. In repertoire, evs 7.30, mats 2.15. Curtain: 10.10.

PETER PAN (*Coliseum,* 836 3161) Dorothy Tutin is Peter and Eric Porter Captain Hook (and Mr Darling) in Robert Helpmann's new £50,000 production of the Barrie classic. The designer is Anthony Holland. Belinda Carroll plays Wendy and Jane Hilary Mrs Darling. Opens December 27 mat & eve, then mats only to January 22.

A VOYAGE ROUND MY FATHER (*Haymarket,* 930 9832) Alec Guinness is the eccentric blind barrister in John Mortimer's autobiographical play, in a new production directed by Ronald Eyre. His son is played by Jeremy Brett, his wife by Loueen MacGrath and his daughter-in-law by Nicola Pagett. Evs 8, Sats 5 & 8.15, mat Wed 2.30 Running time: 2 hours 5 minutes.

WEST OF SUEZ (*Cambridge,* 836 6056) John Osborne's new play set in a newly-independent Caribbean Island. Ralph Richardson and Jill Bennett play lead roles. Anthony Page directs. Transferred from the Royal Court. Evs 8, Sats 6 & 8.40, mat Thurs 3. Running time: 2½ hours.

YOUNG VIC (*Young Vic,* 928 7616) This branch of the National Theatre operates in its own auditorium in The Cut. *The Paper Bag Players* (December 20 to January 8); then *Romeo and Juliet, Endgame, Oedipus, Waiting for Godot* in repertoire, plus Studio productions.

COMEDIES

BIG BAD MOUSE (*Prince of Wales',* 930 8681) Eric Sykes and Jimmy Edwards with Joan Young return to London in the ad-lib farce by Philip King and Falkland Cary in which they appeared at the Shaftesbury for two years from 1966. Mon-Thurs 8, Fri & Sat 6.10 & 8.45. Running time: 2¾ hours.

BUTLEY (*Criterion,* 930 3216) Simon Gray's new play directed by Harold Pinter, with Alan Bates in the name part. Evs 8, Sats 5.15 & 8.30. Running time: 2¼ hours.

CHARLEY'S AUNT (*Apollo,* 437 2663) Tom Courtenay plays Lord Fancourt Babberley in this '69 Theatre Company production of the Brandon Thomas classic comedy. Dilys Hamlett, Wolfe Morris, James Cossins and Celia Bannerman play other leading roles in Braham Murray's production. Evs 7.30, Sats & December 24 at 5 & 8.

DON'T JUST LIE THERE, SAY SOMETHING! (*Garrick,* 836 4601) Brian Rix co-stars with Alfred Marks in a new farce by Michael Pertwee which traces the extraordinary exploits of a junior Cabinet Minister. Evs 8, Sat 5.45 & 8.30, mat Wed 2.45. Running time: 2 hrs 20 mins.

GETTING ON (*Queen's,* 734 1166) Kenneth More plays a disillusioned politician in Alan Bennett's new comedy, directed by Patrick Garland and designed by Julia Trevelyan Oman, the team responsible for *Forty Years On.* Others in the cast are Gemma Jones, Mona Washbourne and Brian Cox. Evs 8, Sat 5.30 & 8.30, mat Thurs 3. Running time 2¼ hours.

THE GOOD-NATURED MAN (*National Theatre, Old Vic,* 928 7616) Goldsmith's early and much-neglected comedy, directed by John Dexter, with Jim Dale and Bill Fraser as Lofty and Croaker. In repertoire, evs 7.30, mats 2.15.

HOW THE OTHER HALF LOVES (*Lyric,* 437 3686) Robert Morley, Jan Holden and Mary Miller in Alan Ayckbourn's hilarious comedy, directed by Robin Midgley. Evs 8, Sat 5.30 & 8.30, mat Wed 3. Running time: 2½ hours.

THE MAN MOST LIKELY TO . . . (*Duke of York's,* 836 5122) Joyce Rayburn's comedy returns to the West End seven months after the end of its long run at the Vaudeville. Leslie Phillips again directs and heads the cast. Mon-Fri 8.15, Sats & January 6 and 13 at 5.30 and 8.30.

● *When telephoning from outside London area use prefix 01*

THE MAN OF MODE (*Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldwych,* 836 6404) Sir George Etherege's comedy of manners, probably not seen in London since its own time, the late 17th century. Brenda Bruce, Alan Howard, John Wood, Vivien Merchant and Julian Glover play the leads in Terry Hands' production. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30. Curtain: 10.15. In repertoire from December 30.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE (*National Theatre, Old Vic,* 928 7616) Laurence Olivier's Shylock is the centrepiece of Jonathan Miller's late-Victorian production, with Joan Plowright as Portia. Evs 7.30, mats 2.15. December 27 to January 8. Curtain: 10.20.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (*Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldwych,* 836 6404) Peter Brook's production, first seen during the 1970 Stratford season. The roles of Oberon and Theseus are played by Alan Howard, Titania and Hippolyta by Sara Kestelman, with David Waller as Bottom. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30. Curtain: 10.30. In repertoire from December 27.

MOVE OVER, MRS MARKHAM (*Vaudeville,* 836 9988) Moira Lister, Tony Britton, Diane Hart, Terence Alexander with Cicely Courtneidge in a new comedy by Ray Cooney and John Chapman. Evs 8, mats Tues 2.45, Sat 5 & 8. Curtain: 10.30.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING (*Royal Shakespeare Company, Aldwych,* 836 6404) Ronald Eyre's 1971 Stratford production, with Elizabeth Spriggs and Derek Godfrey as Beatrice and Benedick. Nine performances only to December 23. Evs 7.30, mats 2.30.

NO SEX, PLEASE—WE'RE BRITISH (*Strand,* 836 2660) Evelyn Laye, Michael Crawford, Linda Thorson and Simon Williams in the new Anthony Marriott/Alistair Foot comedy, which Allan Davis directs. Evs 8, Sats 5.45 & 8.30, mat Thurs 3. Running time: 2¼ hours.

THE PHILANTHROPIST (*May Fair,* 629 3036) Christopher Hampton's play has George Cole as the misunderstood philology don, Edward de Souza as his friend Donald, and Annabel Leventon as his girlfriend. Direction by Robert Kidd. Evs 8.15, Sat 6.15 & 8.45. Running time: 2¼ hrs.

PYJAMA TOPS (*Whitehall,* 930 6692) An American comedy based on a French one—*Moumou.* Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 8.30, Wed 6.15 & 8.45, Sat 7.30 & 10. Running time: 2 hrs.

THE SECRETARY BIRD (*Savoy,* 836 8888) Jeremy Hawk plays the successful middle-aged novelist in William Douglas Home's domestic comedy, now in its 4th year. Muriel Pavlow is his young wife. Evs 8, mats Wed 2.30 & Sat 5. Curtain: 10.15.

STRAIGHT UP (*Piccadilly,* 437 4506) New comedy by Irish playwright Syd Cheatle, first seen at the 1970 Edinburgh Festival fringe.

SYLVESTE (*Theatre Upstairs, Royal Court,* 730 2554) Ken Campbell's Road Show with an evening of assorted chaos which includes 'an attempt at the World Record length of time for having a Ferret Down your Trousers . . .' Tue-Sat 8, December 28 to January 25.

THERE'S A GIRL IN MY SOUP (*Comedy,* 930 2578) Terence Frisby's long-running comedy (now in its 6th year) about a fortyish TV cookery expert (now played by Charles Tingwell) and his affair with a jet-propelled girlfriend (Gay Singleton). Mon-Fri 8.15, Sats 6 and 8.40, mats Wed 2.30. Running time: 2¼ hours.

THRILLERS

THE MOUSETRAP (*Ambassadors,* 836 1171) Dame Agatha Christie's whodunnit—London's longest running production now in its 20th year. Evs 8, mats Tues 2.45, Sats 5. Curtain: 10.20.

SLEUTH (*St Martin's,* 836 1443) Marius Goring and John Fraser now play the leads in Anthony Shaffer's ingenious and witty suspense play. Clifford Williams is the director. Evs 8, Sat 5 & 8.30, mats Wed 2.45. Running time: 2½ hours.

SUDDENLY AT HOME (*Fortune,* 836 2238) Gerald Harper in a first play for the stage by Francis Durbridge, author of innumerable successful television thriller serials. Mon-Fri 8, Sat 5.30 & 8.30, mat Thurs 2.45. Running time: 2¼ hours.

MUSICALS

AMBASSADOR (*Her Majesty's,* 930 6606) Howard Keel and Danielle Darrieux co-star in a new musical loosely based on the novel by Henry James and set in Paris at the beginning of this century. Evs 7.30, mats Wed & Sat 2.30. Curtain: 10.20.

CANTERBURY TALES (*Phoenix,* 836 8611) Nevill Coghill's version of Chaucer's Tales, now in its 4th year. Cast includes Jessie Evans, Jack Haig and Kenneth J Warren. Mon-Thur 7.30, Fri & Sat 5.15 & 8.30. Running time: 2 hrs 45 mins.

THE DIRTIEST SHOW IN TOWN (*Duchess,* 836 8243) A product of the off-Broadway La Mama company, directed by the show's author, Tom Eyen, with seven of the 11 members of the original company. Evs. 8.30, Fri & Sat 6.30 & 9. Running time: 1½ hours.

GODSPELL (*Roundhouse,* 267 2564) An American musical based on the Gospel according to St Matthew, with music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. It opened in New York last May and is still playing to capacity audiences. Mon-Thur 8, Fri & Sat 6 & 9. Running time: 2 hrs 5 mins (to January 22).

THE GREAT WALTZ (*Drury Lane,* 836 8108) A new and lavish American musical set in Vienna in 1840 and based on the music of Johann Strauss, father and son. Wendy Toye directs. Evs 7.30, mats Wed & Sat 2.30. Curtain: 10.20.

HAIR (*Shaftesbury,* 836 6596) The American 'tribal love-rock' musical directed by Tom O'Horgan, the man responsible for the original production. The company is a London-recruited one led by Caroline Lyndon, Paul Nicholas and Gary Hamilton. Evs 8, Fri and Sat 5.30 and 8.40. Running time: 2 hrs 35 mins.

HIS MONKEY WIFE (*Hampstead Theatre Club,* 722 9301) Sandy Wilson's new musical, adapted from the novel by John Collier, is about a man who brings home from Africa a highly-talented chimpanzee called Emily who tricks him into marrying her by taking the place of his bride-to-be in church—at knifepoint. Basil Coleman is the director and June Ritchie plays Emily with Robert Swann as her owner. December 20 to January 17.

SHOWBOAT (*Adelphi,* 836 7611) Harold Fielding's lavish new production of the famous Jerome Kern/Oscar Hammerstein II musical, with Cleo Laine, Lorna Dallas, Andre Jobin and Thomas Carey, under the direction of Wendy Toye. Evs 7.30, mats Thurs 3 & Sat 4. Curtain: 10.30.

TYGER (*National Theatre, New,* 836 3878) Adrian Mitchell's celebration of the life of William Blake, directed jointly by Michael Blakemore and John Dexter. Gerald James heads a large cast as Blake. Evs 7.30, mats 3. Curtain: 10. In repertoire to January 8.

REVUE, VARIETY, ETC

AT THE PALACE (*Palace,* 437 6834) Danny La Rue stars in a new spectacular revue also featuring Toni Palmer, David Ellen, Joe Church and Jackie Sands. Mon-Thur 8, Fri & Sat 5.30 and 8.30. Running time: 2½ hours.

CINDERELLA (*Palladium,* 437 7373) Ronnie Corbett is Buttons, Clodagh Rodgers Cinderella and Terry Scott and Julian Orchard the Ugly Sisters in this year's lavish Palladium pantomime. From December 21.

MAGIC OF THE MINSTRELS (*Victoria Palace,* 834 1317) The Black and White Minstrels. Twice nightly at 6.15 and 8.45.

OH! CALCUTTA! (*Royalty,* 405 8004) Kenneth Tynan's 'evening of elegant erotica', with contributions from Jules Feiffer. John Lennon, Leonard Melfi, Peter Nichols, Joe Orton, Sam Shepard, among others. Clifford Williams directs. Mon, Tues, Thur & Fri 8. Wed & Sat 6.15 & 9. Running time: 2½ hrs.

PLAYBILLS

casts and credits of first nights reviewed this month

The Balcony

By Jean Genet, in a new translation by Barbara Wright and Terry Hands. Presented by the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Aldwych on November 25, 1971. Directed by Terry Hands, designed by Farrah, music by Guy Woolfenden, lighting by Stewart Leviton.

Mme Irma, Brenda Bruce; *General*, Philip Locke; *General's Girl*, Helen Mirren; *Carmen*, Estelle Kohler; *Bishop*, T P McKenna; *Bishop's Girl*, Frances de la Tour; *Thief*, Mary Rutherford; *Judge*, Clement McCallin; *Executioner*, Hugh Keays Byrne; *Beggar*, Reg Lye; *Beggar's Girl*, Laura Graham; *Blood*, John York; *Tears*, Ronald Forfar; *Sperm*, Ralph Cotterill; *Chief of Police*, Barry Stanton; *Georgette*, Holly Wilson; *Chantal*, Heather Canning; *Wounded Man*, Colin Edwynn; *Roger*, Patrick Stewart; *Armand*, Boyd Mackenzie; *Louis*, Patrick Godfrey; *Luke*, Terence Taplin; *Mark*, John Wood; *Envoy*, Alan Howard; *Musicians*: Gordon Kember or Robert Stewart, Tony McVey, Robin Weatherall.

Reviewed by Martin Esslin, page 40

Photographed by Douglas Jeffery

The Changing Room

By David Storey. Presented by the Royal Court Theatre with Michael Codron at the Royal Court on November 9, 1971. Directed by Lindsay Anderson, designed by Jocelyn Herbert, lighting by Andy Phillips.

Luke, Don McKillip; *Sandford*, Brian Glover; *Frank Moore*, John Price; *Jack Stringer*, David Hill; *Fielding*, David Daker; *Danny Crosby*, Barry Keegan; *Bryan Atkinson*, Peter Schofield; *Kendal*, Warren Clarke; *Fenchurch*, Peter Childs; *Billy Spencer*, Alun Armstrong; *MacKendrick*, John Rae; *Harry*, John Barrett; *John Clegg*, Matthew Guinness; *Patsy*, Jim Norton; *Walsh*, Edward Judd; *Cliff Owens*, Frank Mills; *Thornton*, Paul Dawkins; *Trevor*, Michael Elphick; *Colin Jagger*, Marc McManus; *Mic Morley*, Edward Peel; *Barry Copley*, Geoffrey Hinsliff; *Tallon*, Brian Lawson.

Reviewed by Mary Holland, page 44

Photographed by John Haynes

Friday

By Hugo Claus, translated by Christopher Logue. Presented by The Theatre Upstairs at the Royal Court, in association with Michael White, on November 23, 1971. Directed by Roger Croucher, lighting by Liz Wells, set built by Reg Parsons.

Jean, Diana Coupland; *George*, John Thaw; *Eric*, Tony Selby.

Reviewed by Nigel Andrews, page 50

Godspell

Music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, conceived by John-Michael Tebelak and based on the Gospel According to St Matthew. Presented by H M Tennent Ltd by arrangement with Edgar Lansbury, Stuart Duncan and Joseph Beruh at the Roundhouse on November 17, 1971. Directed by John-Michael Tebelak, designed by Susan Tsu, staged by Ian Dow, lighting by Joe Davis.

The company: David Essex, Jacquie-Ann Carr, Julie Covington, Neil Fitzwilliam, Jeremy Irons, Verity-Anne Meldrum, Deryk Parkin, Tom Saffery, Gay Soper, Marti Webb.

Reviewed by Robert Cushman, p 38

Photographed by Derry Moore

A Liberated Woman

By Barry Reckord. First performed at the Greenwich Theatre on November 11, 1971. Directed by Ewan Hooper, designed by Suzanne Billings, lighting by John Roffey.

Gail, Linda Marlowe; *Guy*, Barry Reckord; *Scott*, Rudolph Walker.

Reviewed by Nigel Andrews, page 49

Mother Adam

By Charles Dyer. First London performance presented by Stage Seventy Productions in association with Kamiro Limited at the Arts on November 30, 1971. Directed by the author, designed by Ian Knight.

Mammles, Beatrix Lehmann; *Adam*, Roy Dotrice.

Reviewed by Barry Norman, page 50

NEW BOOKS

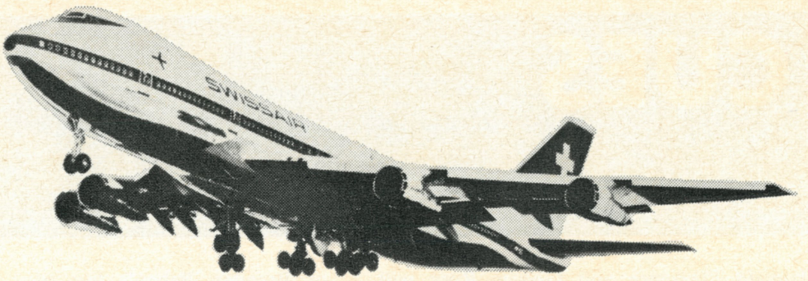
SHAKESPEARE SURVEY 24. Edited by Kenneth Muir. Cambridge University Press, £3

WHAT, I wonder, would Simon Gray's disillusioned Eng Lit don in *Butley* have made of the *Shakespeare Survey* series—volume 24 of which has just been notched up for the groves of academe by Cambridge University Press. Nowadays the volumes are unlikely to be required bedtime reading for all but the most gargantuan of scholarly appetites but even so one does, like Butley, seem dimly to recall a time when the literary criticism industry didn't come across as quite so jaded or self-perpetuating as in the present volume. So, if Butley on opening *Shakespeare Survey 24* might turn to thoughts of handing in his resignation or merely of pouring himself a compensatory scotch—part of the trouble could also lie with the editors of the series.

Kenneth Muir, the present editor, has always tried to steer a course away from controversy in matters of interpretation and towards erudite textual analysis. The news from the theatrical fronts of Stratford and London was rarely good and largely ignored by including a highly unsatisfactory summing up of Stratford seasons in the final pages of each volume. But this year's survey, organised around a Stratford seminar on 'Shakespeare: Theatre Poet', has had to take a more comprehensive though reluctant look at the practice of young RSC directors. There is an enthusiastic, though often inaccurate, account of the 1970 Stratford season by Peter Thompson (it can't be correct to call Alan Howard's Hamlet 'of the matinee idol kind' after one has seen Ian McKellan's nor to say that 'there was no evident linking' in design or interpretation when that whole season *was* organised around the white box design concept of Trevor Nunn and Christopher Morley). In fact throughout the essays there is an unusual amount of comment on productions and references to articles and interviews published in theatre magazines including *P&P*.

All very nice—but for the fact that the editors are obviously hell bent on *not* taking the theatre seriously. It is sad reading Muir's predictable plea for playing 'Shakespeare straight, without cuts and without gimmicks'. And even sadder to find as distinguished a drama professor as John Russell Brown taking to task his ex-pupil Terry Hands, John Barton and Brook for being unfaithful to the form and meaning of Elizabethan theatre. In fact Barton's textual work on the histories and Terry Hands' salvaging of *Merry Wives* showed a loyalty to Quartos and Folios which few academics can rival—and they also came up with something that worked as contemporary theatre. It's noticeable that the most original essay in the book comes from Ann Barton (*Shakespeare and The Limits of Language*) where there is an attempt made to relate the Bard's poetry to a modern theatre

(*to page* 90)



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CUES

new plays and casting

Donald Pleasence and George Rose will play the leads in Simon Gray's play, *Wise Child* (which starred Alec Guinness in the original London production at Wyndham's in 1967) on Broadway in the New Year. James Hammerstein will direct.

Rachel Roberts joins Albert Finney to co-star in E A Whitehead's new play, *Alpha Beta,* which has its premiere at the Royal Court on January 26. The central characters are husband and wife battling their way through a disastrous marriage. The director is Anthony Page.

Ronald Pickup will play the name part in David William's production of *Richard II* which is scheduled to join the National Theatre repertoire at the Old Vic in March. Michael Annals will be the designer. It will be followed in May by the premiere of Arnold Wesker's new play, *The Old Ones,* which John Dexter will direct; this renews a theatre partnership begun at the Royal Court when Dexter directed *Roots, Chips With Everything* and *The Kitchen.* In the early summer, the NT will present two Greek classics in a double-bill: *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes, adapted by Germaine Greer (the Women's Lib leader whose first work for the theatre it will be), and *The Bacchae* by Euripides, the plays to be directed respectively by Michael Blakemore and Roland Joffe. The National's season at the New will end in the spring.

David Warner will be seen as a Labour MP in David Hare's new play, *The Great Exhibition,* which is about sexual perversion among politicians; it has its first performance at the Hampstead Theatre Club in the New Year.

The RSC are to present *Toad of Toad Hall* at Stratford-upon-Avon for a three-week Christmas season from January 3. Peter Woodthorpe will be seen as Toad (a role he played at the Comedy in 1962) with Tony Church as Badger, Jeffery Dench as Ratty and Michael Williams as Mole. Judi Dench and Lisa Harrow will both play fieldmice, the former also doubling as Mama Rabbit. The Judge will be Sydney Bromley. The play is being directed by Euan Smith, who joined the RSC last year as Assistant Director at Stratford, and the designer is Adrian Vaux. H Fraser-Simson's original score is being used.

The 1972 Dublin Theatre Festival will be held from March 13 to 25, and the highlight is expected to be the first performance of Brendan Behan's last play, *Richard's Cork Leg,* missing parts of the first Act of which were found by his widow in a desk and suitcases at their Dublin home. Jack MacGowran will appear at the Festival in Beckett's *Beginning To End* in a production directed by the author, and Susannah York takes part in a rehearsed reading of *The Samson Riddle,* a new epic play by Wolf Mankowitz to be given one performance at the Gate. She plays Delilah with Hilton Edwards as Manoah, Samson's father.

Sammy Davis Jr is to star in an all-Negro production of *A Tree Grows In Brooklyn.* Betty Smith's famous story, with score by Arthur Schwartz, is being rewritten by Dorothy Fields to fit into a Brooklyn black ghetto context, and Schwartz has written three new songs for the show. Plans are for it to open in London next August, and later on Broadway.

BITEF 1972—the 6th three-week Belgrade Festival—is to have as its theme the Roots of the Theatre, presented by companies which are still employing their classical traditions, or reapplying them in modern terms. Among directors due to appear at the Festival are Giorgio Strehler from Italy and Karolos Koun from Greece.

Christmas Present, the Edinburgh Traverse holiday production which opens on December 28, is a short play commissioned from a number of Traverse writers, who have been asked to say what Christmas means to them. The writers include John Antrobus, Syd Cheatle, Stanley Eveling, John Grillo, David Halliwell, David Hare, Tom Mallin, Mustapha Matura, David Snodin, John Spurling, Cecil Taylor and Snoo Wilson. In the New Year, Howard Brenton's new play, *Hitler Dances* has its premiere at the Traverse Workshop.

Mother Earth, a pop-musical revue from Los Angeles. where it is still playing, follows *Godspell* into the Roundhouse on February 2. The author is David McNiven, and the show's theme is ecology, gently fantasising on the kind of civilisation that we may expect to have in fifty years' time, exploring the cycle of birth, copulation and death. The director is Max Stafford-Clark.

The BBC's Bristol Production Centre is promoting a Play Competition for Radio, to mark the golden jubilee of the BBC which falls this year. A prize of £500 will be awarded to the winner, and the closing date for entries is March 20. Judges are Martin Esslin, Desmond Hawkins and Barbara Jefford. Details from BBC Radio Drama Competition, Broadcasting House, Bristol BS8 2LR.

Derek Smith is this year's resident of Toad Hall in the London production of the Kenneth Grahame/AA Milne classic which David Conville presents for a season of matinees at the Duke of York's on December 20. Richard Goolden again plays Mole with James Cairncross as Badger and Chris Harris as Ratty.

Henry Fonda will star in a revival of William Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life* at the new John F Kennedy Centre in Washington. The production begins a three-week run on January 12, and will be presented by Plumpstead Playhouse, a non-profit organisation with which Fonda is connected.

Lionel Bart's score for his new musical, *Quasimodo,* based on *The Hunchback of Notre Dame,* will be issued shortly as a two-disc recording before it gets its first stage production. The same process was carried out for Bart's biggest hit, *Oliver!* when the music was widely known before the show's premiere.

The Bristol Theatre Royal reopens on January 12 after a period of 20 months in which an extensive £700,000 redevelopment programme has been carried out. The Bristol Old Vic's gala opening production is a musical adaptation of Pinero's *Trelawny of the Wells,* retitled *Trelawny,* and written by Aubrey Woods, George Rowell and Julian Slade. Ian Richardson, Hayley Mills and Timothy West lead the company, and the show is directed by Val May.

Edward Gordon Craig, the centenary of whose birth takes place in 1972, will be the subject of an exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre from February 2 until March 5. Staged in three parts, it will be called *E G Craig—Man of the Theatre,* and covers firstly the period up to 1899 when he acted, learned wood engraving and started to look for a new type of theatre; secondly the period 1900 to 1903 when he lived in Camden and produced a number of operas and plays; and thirdly the period from 1903 onwards when he lived on the Continent and put a great deal of his time and energy into finding new ways of staging, and also mounted some important productions.

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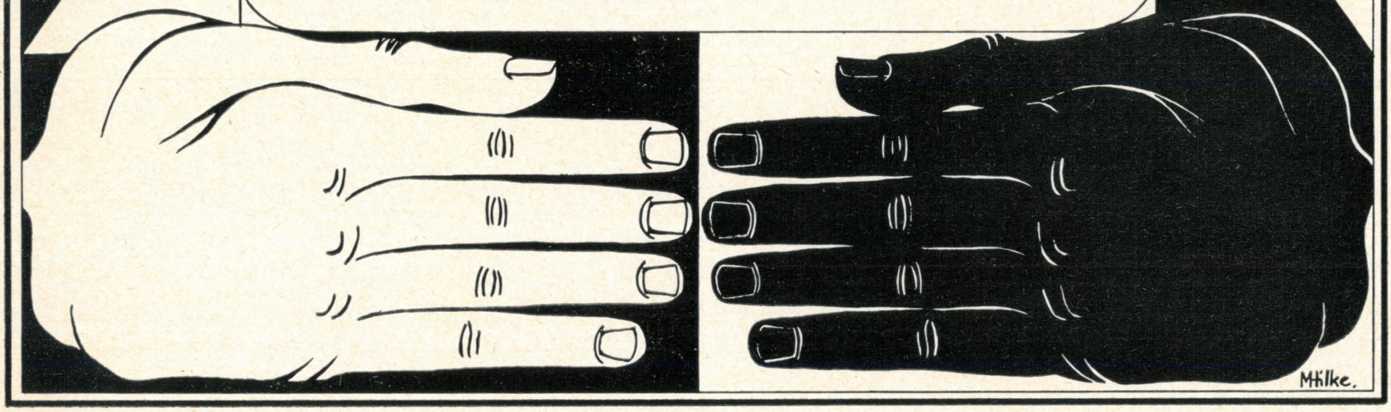


Peggy Ashcroft, Angela Lansbury (making her London debut), Patience Collier and Sheila Hancock appear in the British premiere of Edward Albee's latest play, All Over, which the RSC present at the Aldwych on January 25. They play, respectively, Wife, Mistress, Nurse and Daughter, with Sebastian Shaw as Best Friend and David Waller as Son. Peter Hall directs

Stanley Holloway returns to the London stage for the first time since My Fair Lady in 1958. In the New Year he opens in Siege, a first play by David Ambrose in which he co-stars with Alastair Sim and Michael Bryant, who play Prime Ministers past and present. The setting is a distinguished London club, and Holloway is cast as the manservant

Diana Rigg and Michael Hordern will both make their debuts with the National Theatre when they appear in Tom Stoppard's new play, Jumpers. It has its premiere at the Old Vic at the end of January, under the direction of Peter Wood. This is Stoppard's first full-length play since Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, which the NT presented in 1967

The East Midlands Arts Association is to form a regional, professional touring theatre company as the first phase of an operation called EMMA (East Midlands Mobile Arts). The company will take professional productions to any society or building willing to house them at any time of the day—and will perform a variety of material from a formal piece of theatre plus discussion, to documentaries in the classroom or entertainment in the pubs. The aim is to reach people in towns and villages who are not within easy distance of the reps in the region. Artistic director of EMMA is Mick Rodger, recently appointed Regional Theatre Director for the East Midlands Arts Association.

Barrie Ingham's one-man show, *Love . . . Love . . . Love . . .* has its first performance in this country at the Mermaid on December 30, following a successful tour abroad. Ingham, who has just completed three years with the RSC and was in the title role of the recent television series *Hine,* describes his solo programme as an exploration of man's most treasured emotion. His material ranges from St Paul to Bob Dylan, from Shakespeare to Mickey Spillane. At the Mermaid it will be given as a late-night show at 9 pm until January 15.

The 1972 Pitlochry Festival will open on April 29, and six plays will be presented between that date and September 30. Feydeau's *A Tailor For Ladies,* not seen before in this country, will be the opening production, followed by Moliere's *Tartuffe;* a revival of the Ian Hay/Stephen King-Hall 'romance of the Navy', *The Middle Watch;* and Barrie's *Dear Brutus. A Footstool For God,* a new play by Scots journalist Bill Watson, has its premiere at Pitlochry on May 4 and its run will be limited to the first half of the season, and the Festival's second new work, *Red is for Winter,* is a documentary about the life and times of Montrose, written and composed by Christopher Denys. Denys returns for his third season as Director of Productions, and will be responsible for his own play as well as the Feydeau, Moliere and *Middle Watch.* Joan Knight will direct *A Footstool For God,* and Clive Perry *Dear Brutus.*

John Warner will play Mrs Crusoe, the Dame in the Thorndike, Leatherhead pantomime, *Robinson Crusoe* which opens on Christmas Eve. Jill Martin is Principal Boy and Sally Smith is Polly Perkins with James Bree as the villain, Will Atkins.

The Hunting of the Snark, a musical extravaganza for children by Laurence Georghegan with music by Kenneth Paine, opens at the Tower, Canonbury, on December 27. The show is based on material by Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, and tells the story in words and music of friends who set out in search of the dreaded Snark.

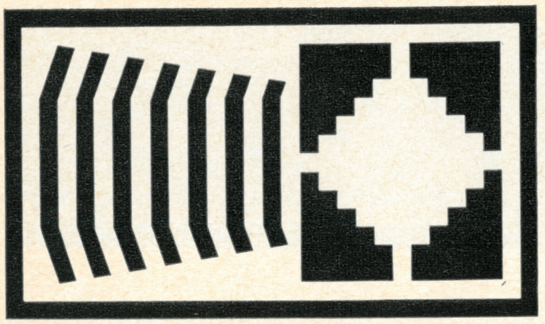
Leatherhead Thorndike's production to mark the 21st anniversary of theatre in Leatherhead will be *The Man Who Stayed At Home* by Lechmere Worrall and J E Harold Terry. This comedy spy drama of the First World War was first staged in 1914, and the most recent professional production in this country was in 1943. It will be directed by Jordan Lawrence with David Stoll as the hero of the story.

Sybil Thorndike is re-recording the tapes of her distinctive 'bar calls' for the Thorndike, and they will be her present to Hazel Vincent Wallace, Managing Director of the theatre, during the 21st birthday celebrations on January 25. The recordings were made by the Thorndike's sound electrician, Mark Titmus, at Dame Sybil's Chelsea flat.

John Stuart Anderson returns to the Arts on January 20 to give seven performances of his new one-man show, *Byron: The Summer of a Dormouse* specially written for him by Nicholas Petrides. This dramatic presentation is drawn entirely from Byron's own writings, and aims at giving an impression of the poet's life, and in particular his last months at Missolonghi.

Sleep Fast They've Landed by the Bristol Revunions, is presented at Hampstead Theatre Club as their late-night show from December 22 over the Christmas period. The production, which was conceived at Bristol University last year, has played with considerable success at the Edinburgh and Nottingham Festivals, and follows the university tradition set by *Beyond the Fringe.*

The Questors, Ealing's leading amateur theatre, is holding a St Valentine's Draw on February 19 in the theatre after the evening performance, in order to raise money for the new foyer extension added to the building (built in 1962, founded in 1930) last October. Prizes include £100 or a holiday for two, a portable television set, and a case of champagne.



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LETTERS

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John Arden

FOLLOWING MY LETTER in last month's *P&P* and John Arden's reply, I have to say the PD detainees in the Crumlin Road issued a statement on Monday, September 6, 1971 of which part reads: 'There should be no let-up in the campaign [of civil disobedience] until Stormont is smashed and that will be the signal to begin the struggle for the Workers' Republic (*Irish Times*, September 7).

My main point remains—that, by now, the removal of Stormont (which has offered considerable reforms as a basis for discussion) would activate the fears and nightmares of unionist workers and postpone the realisation of 'how they have been had' which John Arden wants to give them. But I apologise for simplifying the PD position and taking the ambiguous word 'struggle' literally, for we need perpetual vigilance about language—and especially in Northern Ireland—which is my chief objection to the original article and to John Arden's more temperate reply to my letter. The euphemistic niceties of the Compton Report ('brutality/physical ill-treatment') are dangerously likely to seem less objectionable if John Arden allows himself (for example) to call his sensationalist sarcasms in the original article 'assertions that the Army behaves badly'. But there is little point in heaping up examples of what any reader of the article and subsequent correspondence can see without much effort. I hope the reader will also recognise substantial agreement between myself and John Arden on two major issues: the horror of the semi-fascist nationalism of the Provisionals and the rightness of a stand against pre-censorship.

BRIAN ROTHWELL,
Selwyn College, Cambridge.

Robin Phillips

IN A RECENT interview in another publication, I discussed my need to find a cause before attempting a new piece of work. I accepted *Abelard and Heloise* and enjoyably worked on it *for* Ronald Millar. Although I admire his work, it doesn't necessarily follow that I must admire mine. I had reason to be grateful to Mr Millar, and was delighted to have a chance of repaying a little of his faith in me.

The feeling of dissatisfaction expressed in my interview with Robert Waterhouse in the December 1971 *P&P* (Direction & Design) was entirely to do with my own work, and only mine. I have, on various occasions, discussed my feeling of inadequacy about the production with both John Gale and Ronnie Millar and, with their permission, I have from time to time modified certain aspects of the presentation. Much that I have learnt from John Gale I have been able to carry back with me to the subsidised theatre where my three productions for the RSC have come in exactly on or under budget. Of course, Mr Gale shocked me during our first meetings. He intended to. But now, after two years, I can only say I hope he continues to do so. Nine months after the London opening of *Abelard* I was fortunate to work on the American production. It was for me the most stimulating rehearsal period I have experienced in the theatre, working with a wonderfully talented and loving cast. The same adjectives apply to my present London cast, and I hope the inadequacy I feel about long runs does not show too much during our necessarily brief, but enjoyable, rehearsals together.

It would appear that some of my remarks have caused distress. They were not meant to. An interview carried out on the opening night of a new production, by an interviewer who has never seen any work by the people he is interviewing, is obviously not the time to attempt to be lightheartedly honest about a serious problem. Honesty in the theatre would be refreshing and, I would have thought, would be acceptable in a professional publication such as this.

ROBIN PHILLIPS,
19 *Wolesley Road.*
East Molesey, Surrey

Projectors

As the voice and pen of Strand Electric for 38 years (now Rank for three) I must take up Robert Waterhouse's remark in the October issue that 'Nobody is particularly willing to discuss them [developments] in detail, least of all Rank Strand Electric, who hold the monopoly position for manufacturing and selling theatre projectors in this country.' The second part about monopoly is of course rubbish and if the first part means that Rank Strand are unwilling to make rash promises in a field so technical as projected scenery then I am glad of their restraint; I for one have not always been so wise. In actual fact no firm more freely disposes of information through its lecture programmes, its quarterly issues of *Tabs* and a number of other publications.

Projection in the equipment sense is almost entirely a matter of light source and one cannot have a tougher battle to fight than turning watts into light rather than heat—less than 10% of the energy in the kind of lamps we have had to use is emitted as light. The Patt. 752 referred to in the article uses a large 4kW lamp with a large slide. Recently a very small lamp (known as the CSI) has become available—first as 400 watts and now as 1000W—which gives roughly four times the light for the same wattage. Thus in the theatre we now have the equivalent of 4000 watts for a mere 1000 watt. But the light cannot be dimmed and rather expensive auxiliary equipment is necessary to feed it. Of course to get us really far ahead we need 4000 watts as the starting point—lots of light follows but fearsome problems with slides.

Then of course there is the laser, holography and all that springs from these. The truth is that the number of theatres which could afford this kind of thing is very very small and further the general stage lighting market, even when considered on a world scale, is trivial. What we in stage lighting have always had to do is to latch on to appropriate technical developments in other fields and turn them to our ends. To initiate for ourselves is to encourage reckless extravagance. One example of the proper way to go about things is multiple projection using ordinary Kodak Carousels of a mere 100 or 250 watts; another is the adaptation by Rank Strand of a 4kW Xenon-source film projector to give single slide projection all over the stage as for *The Knot Garden* at Covent Garden—to which I devoted a whole article in *Tabs* earlier this year. This latter comes dangerously near to my definition of extravagance when the cost of the twin projectors (for standby and changeover) and the surrender of twenty-four of the best seats in the house is taken into account. Incidentally this sacrifice plus the addition of six lesser projectors to cover areas round the corners, so to speak, shows what happens when a theatre is not designed for projection. Personally I am convinced that we, that is the theatre, are on the verge of a real breakthrough as far as intensity of projection is concerned, the snag will then be the design of the theatres.

FREDERICK BENTHAM
Rank Strand Electric Ltd.
29 King Street WC2.

Robert Waterhouse writes: *Unfortunately Mr Bentham was not available when I was preparing the article. But I agree with his conclusions which are, after all, similar to my own.*

Joe Orton

I AM writing the authorised biography of Joe Orton for Penguin. I would appreciate any letters or recollections of Orton.

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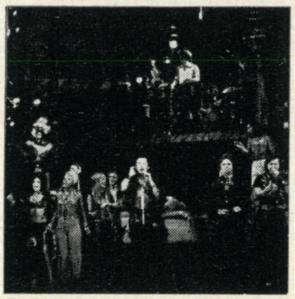

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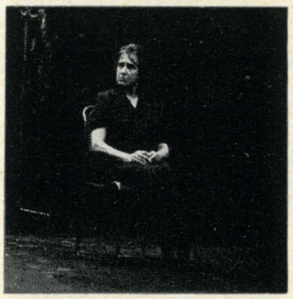
Ralph Richardson
in West of Suez



PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTRESS

Peggy Ashcroft
in The Lovers of Viorne
and Henry VIII

BREAKTHROUGH ACTOR

Anthony Hopkins
National Theatre

BREAKTHROUGH ACTRESS

Heather Canning
RSC

DIRECTOR

Lindsay Anderson for
The Changing Room

DESIGNER

Farrah for
The Balcony

IN THIS FIRST ISSUE of *Plays and Players* to carry a 1972 dateline, fifteen of London's theatre critics take a last look at what they saw in a year's professional theatregoing up to December 1, 1971. In the following pages they indicate which play, musical, performances, production and set proved to have made the deepest impression as the year ends. And as well as voting for the Performance of the Year by an actor and actress they also indicate which actor and which actress they feel made a breakthrough in their theatrical careers in the twelve months.

As one critic voted three ways in the Play of the Year category there were a total of 17 votes cast. Five of these went to Harold Pinter's *Old Times* in the repertoire of the RSC at the Aldwych thereby making it the critic's choice for 1971. Peter Nichols' *Forget-Me-Not Lane* was a close runner-up with four votes. David Storey's *The Changing Room* and Edward Bond's *Lear*, both at the Royal Court, received three and two votes respectively. John Osborne's *West of Suez* also received two votes. David Mercer's *After Haggerty* seen in 1971 at the Criterion received one vote.

In the field of the musical two critics felt no new musical deserved to be recalled while two others voted two ways. Jack Good's *Catch My Soul*, however, emerged as easily the year's most memorable with a total of seven votes. Other musicals mentioned were John-Michael Tebelak's *Godspell*, seen at the Roundhouse (three votes). *The Last Sweet Days of Isaac*, by Gretchen Cryer and Nancy Ford, Jean-Louis Barrault's adaptation of *Rabelais*, *Tyger* by Adrian Mitchell and Mike Westbrook and Robert Montgomery's *Subject to Fits* all of which received one vote each.

Ralph Richardson in *West of Suez* and Peggy Ashcroft in *The Lovers of Viorne*, both at the Royal Court, emerged as the Actor and Actress of the Year with Sir Ralph collecting seven votes and Dame Peggy four. Other actors mentioned in this category were Paul Scofield (*The Captain of Kopenick*, four votes), Alan Badel (*Kean*, three votes), Emrys James (Iago at Stratford, one vote), Alan Bates (*Butley*, one vote), John Gielgud (Caesar in *Caesar and Cleopatra*, one vote), Faith Brook (Gertrude in Prospect's *Hamlet*, three votes), Eileen Atkins (Suzanna Andler, two votes), Joan Greenwood (*The Chalk Garden*, two votes), Freda Dowie (in the Greenwich *Electra* revival, one vote), Joyce Redman in the Chichester *Dear Antoine*, Yvonne Bryceland in *Boesman and Lena*, and Elizabeth Spriggs (RSC one vote).

One critic felt that no actor or actress had made any significant breakthrough in 1971. But Ben Kingsley as Gramsci in *Occupations* and Anthony Hopkins for work in the National repertoire were each accorded four votes in this category. An editorial casting vote for his Coriolanus made him the *P&P* choice for the most impressive breakthrough for an actor. For an actress Heather Canning with three votes cast (in the RSC season at the Place) was thought to have made the most impressive breakthrough. Others mentioned in this category were John Kane (two votes) and one vote each were cast for Harry Andrews as Bond's Lear, Christopher Benjamin (*John Bull's Other Island*), Robert Bernal in *Mr Joyce is Leaving Paris*, Lance LeGault in *Catch My Soul*, and Emrys James as Iago. Actresses who were considered to have made a breakthrough in 1971 were Helen Mirren (two votes), Yvonne Bryceland (two votes), and, with one vote each, Faith Brook, Julia Foster, Susan Fleetwood, Gemma Jones, Sara Kestelman, Felicity Kendal and Lola Pashalinski.

The critics found Lindsay Anderson's direction of *The Changing Room* at the Royal Court (six votes) and Farrah's designs for *The Balcony* at the Aldwych (five votes) the year's most memorable production and set.

JOHN BARBER

DAILY TELEGRAPH

A GOOD YEAR for plays, John Osborne (*West of Suez*), David Mercer (*After Haggerty*), Harold Pinter (*Old Times*), David Storey (*The Changing Room*), and Peter Nichols (*Forget-Me-Not Lane*) all rang the bell, and there was at least a resounding tinkle from Alan Bennett (*Getting On*). Two savage newcomers are welcome: E A Whitehead, for his heartless *Foursome*; and Tom Mallin for his compassionate *Curtains*.

A good year for revivals, with particular gratitude to Jonathan Miller for his *Danton's Death*, Frith Banbury for *Mrs Warren's Profession*, John Dexter for *A Woman Killed With Kindness* and Frank Dunlop for his *Kopenick* in John Mortimer's witty translation (why does everyone keep crabbing the National?) Salutations to the RSC for a rewarding *Much Ado* and a courageous *Balcony*, and to the Mermaid for their eloquent revival of *John Bull's Other Island*.

A good year for acting. Disliking categories, I have intentionally blurred my first choices, and still feel I should have included Patience Collier's Bessie Berger in *Awake and Sing* which should have transferred from Hampstead.

In fact, a good year.

- **New play:** Comedy: The Changing Room, by David Storey. Tragedy: West of Suez, by John Osborne. Divertissement: Forget-Me-Not Lane, by Peter Nichols.
- **New musical:** Rabelais, adapted by Jean Louis Barrault. Catch My Soul, by Jack Good.
- **Performance by an actor:** Ralph Richardson in West of Suez. Paul Scofield in The Captain of Kopenick. Alan Badel in Kean.
- **Performance by an actress:** Joan Plowright in A Woman Killed With Kindness. Joan Greenwood in The Chalk Garden.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Robert Bernal in Mr Joyce is Leaving Paris.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Felicity Kendal in Kean.
- **Production:** Victor Garcia's of The Maids, for the Nuria Espert Company (World Theatre Season).
- **Set:** Patrick Robertson's for Danton's Death.

FELIX BARKER

LONDON EVENING NEWS

BLINDING ME to practically everything else this year has been the outstanding work of the Royal Shakespeare Company. At the Aldwych (triumphantly), The Place (adventurously) and at Stratford (not quite so conspicuously) the RSC have put themselves far ahead of the National Theatre, their nearest rivals. They have chalked up a stunning succession of first-rate productions.

To join Peter Brook's *Dream* came Pinter's fascinating, enigmatic *Old Times*; Gorky's *Enemies*, a political extension of *The Cherry Orchard;* and *Exiles*, Joyce's only work for the theatre. Each was extremely well done, and the last two gave us a chance to admire again the measured, secret assurance of Vivien Merchant, and appreciate the gargoyle strength of John Wood.

Terry Hands, a young director with enormous panache, then followed this up with his *Man of Mode*, and the first public performance of Genet's *The Balcony*. Thus we had plays of 1595, 1676, 1905, 1719, 1957, and 1971 presented, and perfectly rendered.

As if this weren't enough, the RSC leased and partially converted a ballet-school theatre—The Place off the Euston Road—for three smaller-scale plays,

Occupations by Trevor Griffiths; *Subject to Fits,* Robert Montgomery's reworking of Dostoievsky's *The Idiot;* and Robin Phillips' revival of Strindberg's *Miss Julie,* so realistic that a member of the audience shouted out in protest at the apparent killing of the heroine's pet bird.

That these varied plays should be found, and all be imaginatively staged and superbly acted in a single year, indicates a company at the top of its form.

- **New play:** Old Times, by Harold Pinter.
- **New musical:** Catch My Soul, by Jack Good.
- **Performance by an actor:** Ralph Richardson in West of Suez.
- **Performance by an actress:** Joyce Redman in Dear Antoine (at Chichester, but not matched on the Piccadilly first night).
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** John Kane as the Prince in Subject to Fits.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Heather Canning for performances in Occupations, Miss Julie and The Balcony.
- **Production:** Robin Phillips' of Dear Antoine.
- **Set:** Farrah's for The Balcony.

MICHAEL BILLINGTON

THE GUARDIAN

FIRST, a personal note: having graduated from the status of deputy drama critic to full-time stall-holder later in the year, it may seem arrogant of me to offer my Olympian verdicts. But, in fact, I contrived to see nearly everything the twelvemonth had to offer. What struck me most about the year was that it saw a modest, but encouraging, revival in the commercial theatre. At one point it was possible to walk along Shaftesbury Avenue and find oneself confronted by work from Ayckbourn, Nichols, Sartre and Bennett, as well as the untiring Mr La Rue: not bad, even though three of the four plays emanated from subsidised houses. It was, in fact, a good year for new plays with Osborne (*West of Suez*) and Pinter (*Old Times*) doing their best work for some time; Bond's *Lear,* though deeply-flawed, proving the sort of play that gets failure a good name; and Mortimer's *Voyage Round My Father* and Simon Gray's *Butley* coming up strongly on the rails. As usual, it was a poor year for musicals with only the National's myopically underrated *Tyger* and Fielding's *Showboat* revival offering any real pleasure. Not a startling year for actresses either, but our actor-knights all emerged strongly with Richardson's exuberantly extrovert writer in the Osborne play challenging Scofield's sagging derelict in *Kopenick* for the best actor award. New theatres also seemed to open at the rate of one a month with Sheffield's thrusting Crucible looking potentially the most exciting of the lot. At this rate, critics will soon be living out of caravans.

- **New play:** Forget-Me-Not Lane, by Peter Nichols.
- **New musical:** Tyger by Adrian Mitchell and Mike Westbrook.
- **Performance by an actor:** Paul Scofield in The Captain of Kopenick.
- **Performance by an actress:** Peggy Ashcroft in Henry VIII.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Lance le Gault as Iago in Catch My Soul.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Helen Mirren as Miss Julie.
- **Production:** Peter Hall's of Old Times.
- **Set:** Patrick Robertson's for Danton's Death.

HELEN DAWSON

THE OBSERVER

THIS LIST isn't meant to be a year's 'best' primarily because popping plays, performances, etc into pigeon-holes of excellence has always seemed to me as meaningless as comparing Robert Adam with Frank Lloyd Wright, Stilton with Camembert, or Jane Austen with Muriel Spark. My choice is, therefore, merely a collection of personal preferences, a rather reluctantly played Christmas party game. It's limited, moreover, to the first nights of the last three months since Ronald Bryden's departure, which have been as variously entertaining, boring, rich and mediocre as, I imagine, any other three months of any other theatregoing year.

- **New play:** Lear, by Edward Bond.
- **New musical:** Subject To Fits, by Robert Montgomery.
- **Performance by an actor:** Ralph Richardson in West of Suez.
- **Performance by an actress:** Eileen Atkins in Suzanna Andler.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** The team in The Changing Room.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Lola Pashalinski, for her acrobatics on the chaise-longue in Bluebeard.
- **Production:** William Gaskill's of Lear, and Lindsay Anderson's of The Changing Room.
- **Set:** Jocelyn Herbert's for The Changing Room.

HAROLD HOBSON

SUNDAY TIMES

IT IS VERY DIFFICULT to choose the best play of the year. There have been four plays which in their particular ways could not have been bettered. These are *The Changing Room, West of Suez, Suzanna Andler* and *Old Times.*

There have not been any breakthrough performances if by that one means a performance which places the actor or actress who gives it on a plane that he or she had never occupied before. Eileen Atkins in *Suzanna Andler,* Sir Ralph Richardson in *West of Suez,* Dorothy Tutin in *Old Times,* although very nearly perfect, can hardly be said to have given breakthrough performances, since each of them broke through long ago. There has been, however, one breakthrough production. This is Lindsay Anderson's production of David Storey's *The Changing*

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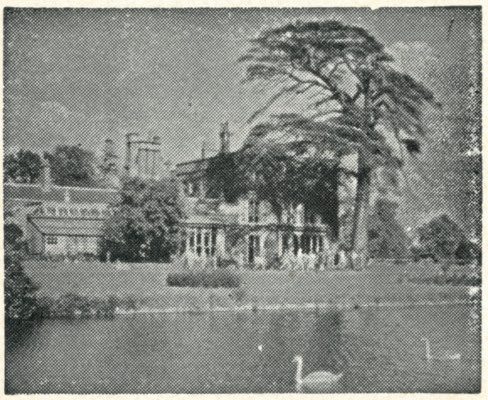

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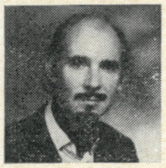
Room. Mr Anderson, of course, also broke through years ago. But his production of *The Changing Room* does something that has never been accomplished before. It is the first stage production to integrate nudity in such a way that one does not notice it, to make it a natural, remarkable, but unremarked part of a performance.

- **New play:** Old Times, by Harold Pinter.
- **New musical:** Godspell, by John-Michael Tebelak and Stephen Schwartz.
- **Performance by an actor:** Ralph Richardson in West of Suez.
- **Performance by an actress:** Eileen Atkins in Suzanna Andler.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** no vote.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** no vote.
- **Production:** Lindsay Anderson's of The Changing Room.
- **Set:** Farrah's for The Balcony.



KENNETH HURREN

THE SPECTATOR

LORD MANSFIELD'S advice to judges—'Give your decisions, never your reasons; your decisions may be right, your reasons are sure to be wrong'—is a refuge generally denied to reviewers, but at a time like this I daresay there's a case to be made for letting the decisions stand there starkly alone. The choice of the 'best' is rarely to be arrived at in any sort of rational way, like that of a boxing referee totting up a scorecard of points, and I am grateful when a knock-out spares me such nervous calculations.

I have, for example, an instinctive feeling, so strong as to allow of no doubts, that Edward Bond's *Lear* was the play of the year. I had a better time at Peter Nichols' *Forget-Me-Not Lane* and Simon Gray's *Butley,* and I found the civilised if sometimes wayward thoughts of John Osborne's *West of Suez* inordinately stimulating. In some other year I should have had a tormenting time choosing among those three; but the Bond play, though I agreed not at all with the glum view of mankind imbedded in it, put not a foot wrong by its lights, and there seemed to me no mistaking the greatness of an achievement that could stand comparison with the late Shakespeare at his most monumental.

There was one other knock-out for me in the year. There were other ladies who were technically expert, sensitive and seductive, moving and magical, intelligent and illuminating, but Faith Brook's Gertrude in the McKellen *Hamlet*—whether she was all or none of these things—was a stunner. Among the actors, it would take a sharper eye than mine to discover flaws in the performances of Ralph Richardson (*West of Suez*), Alan Bates (*Butley*), Alec Guinness (*A Voyage Round My Father*) and Paul Scofield (*The Captain of Kopenick*); I venture into reasons that could be wrong in judging that the last-named had more pitfalls and tripwires to avoid than the others.

Where directors are concerned, the possibility of giving wrong reasons becomes almost inescapable. The precise contribution made to a production by a good, unobtrusive director (as opposed to a self-infatuated and flamboyant one) has always been a matter of mystery and conjecture to me. I must trust to instinct again in suggesting that the loving and lucid contribution made to *Enemies* by David Jones was a more decisive factor than those of Anthony Page to *West of Suez* and Lindsay Anderson to *The Changing Room,* though in both those productions there is a similarly impeccable coalescence of directors', actors' and authors' skills.

It has been a thin year for new musicals: *Catch My Soul* was perhaps all right for those who have never seen Shakespeare's *Othello,* and *Godspell* is perhaps all right for those who have never heard of Jesus and also happen to be under ten; these qualifications seem to me to limit their appeal quite sensationally, and I give my vote to the more modest little rocker, *The Last Sweet Days of Isaac* which I found endearing enough to be worth seeing twice during the week the York company played it at the Old Vic.

I am perplexed by the term 'breakthrough performance', but I dismiss as too frivolous the idea of an award to players who blunder through the scenery and, guided by those with a keener grasp of the contemporary vernacular, I take it to refer to a player who has extended his range, and conceivably the possibilities of his role, beyond anything that may have previously been seen of either. This is a tallish order, but the people I've named may have filled it.

- **New play:** Lear, by Edward Bond.
- **New musical:** The Last Sweet Days of Isaac, by Gretchen Cryer and Nancy Ford.
- **Performance by an actor:** Paul Scofield in The Captain of Kopenick.
- **Performance by an actress:** Faith Brook as Gertrude in Hamlet.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Emrys James as Iago.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Faith Brook as Gertrude in Hamlet.
- **Production:** David Jones' of Enemies.
- **Set:** John Bury's for Old Times.

JEREMY KINGSTON

PUNCH

DIRECTORS are important, and actors and actresses, designers, composers and so forth, but a good year in the theatre means a year of good plays from good contemporaries. Nineteen seventy-one has brought Pinter's *Old Times,* Osborne's *West of Suez,* Storey's *The Changing Room* and Peter Nichols' *Forget-Me-Not Lane.* So 1971 was a good year. (For those who appreciate the works of Edward Bond—I think German playhouses do—his *Lear* presumably establishes the year's quality.)

The only American play of value was *Awake and Sing,* written in 1936. After *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *The Captain of Kopenick,* the National sailed into the doldrums and stayed there for the rest of the year. The welcome revival recently of *The National Health* may mean somebody there is waking up, but forthcoming plans sound dangerously modish. After Germaine Greer's *Lysistrata,* why not Clement Freud to revive *Oedipus,* John Lennon to rewrite some Noh plays?

The RSC has been through troubled patches, though not recently and certainly not with its 1971 productions, a satisfying balance of Ancient and Modern. The Theatre Upstairs flourished; small companies proliferated in basements, pubs and other Under-Off-Shaftesbury Avenue nooks. There has been an increase of plays (mostly horrid, not always American) treating men and women as mere hunks of fleshcake, desirable, disposable, or both. Some of the authors seem to derive pleasure from making audiences feel sick.

If the terms of these awards excluded all the 'commercial' theatres in the middle of London, one would have missed few new shows of quality: Alan Badel's Kean, *The Chalk Garden,* a couple of comedies.

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A Dancing Times Publication

Alec Guinness—not much else. Copulation (simulated) thrived; cuddly Christ arrived.

- **New play:** Old Times, by Harold Pinter.
- **New musical:** Catch My Soul, by Jack Good.
- **Performance by an actor:** Emrys James as Iago at Stratford.
- **Performance by an actress:** Joan Greenwood as Miss Madrigal in The Chalk Garden.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Anthony Hopkins for several roles at the National.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Heather Canning as Christine in Miss Julie.
- **Production:** John Barton's of Othello at Stratford.
- **Set:** Julia Trevelyan Oman's for Othello at Stratford.

HERBERT KRETZMER

DAILY EXPRESS

LONDON CRITICS are beginning to forget what the inside of many commercial theatres look like. The West End is bloated with long runs, with US package tour parties filing off the jumbo jets and heading, it seems, straight for *Abelard and Heloise, Canterbury Tales* and other events good enough, or bad enough, to be included on the shopping list. It is not unlikely that our impresarios, looking for hits, will start thinking more and more about what may appeal not only to middle-brow England, but the Middle West as well. The results have got to be ruinous in the long run, except of course for the managements.

- **New play:** The Changing Room, by David Storey.
- **New musical:** Godspell, by John-Michael Tebelak and Stephen Schwartz.
- **Performance by an actor:** Ralph Richardson in West of Suez.
- **Performance by an actress:** Faith Brook as Gertrude in Hamlet.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** John Kane in Subject To Fits.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Yvonne Bryceland in Boesman and Lena.
- **Production:** Frank Dunlop's of The Captain of Kopenick.
- **Set:** Timothy O'Brien's for Enemies.

PETER LEWIS

DAILY MAIL

BUSINESS is good, which is important. Much of it is good business for good stuff, which is more important. There is definitely less rubbish about than usual. Sadly it was not quite good enough to keep *Forget-Me-Not Lane* running as long as it deserved. This was the best new play in my view because of its originality of form, the sheer craftiness with which Peter Nichols ranged through time and place dissecting not only a family but the outlook of a generation. (I'm prejudiced, naturally, as it happened to be my generation). More substantial than John Mortimer's evocation of his family and generation, though that was equally fluid, elegant and economical in construction.

By the side of these, John Osborne's *West of Suez* looks primitive, hewn out of clumsy lumps of irrelevant detail. Sir Ralph Richardson proves again what wonderful parts Osborne can write but how much time he could save if he didn't imprison them in elaborate scene-setting, unnecessary characters, entrances and exits and the fixing of drinks. Osborne's content (the death of literacy) is worth listening to and far better than his form. Pinter's form is more fascinating than his content. *Old Times* polished its surface to such a pitch that through it one could clearly see nothing, or nothing very much.

Once again the year bulged with memorable performances from the male heavyweights. If only we had a major playwright for them to get their teeth into! The sad note is the continuing (though one still hopes, temporary) decline of the National Theatre. There is something wrong if everyone can do good business but the National. After the splendid *Captain of Kopenick* it stumbled from one error of judgment to another.

Much more of this and it will have to be admitted openly that our actual national theatre is the RSC. When it really stretches itself the great public—far beyond the regular conterie which reads magazines like this—beats at the box office door to get in. Those who are obsessed with making the theatre 'relevant' would do well to remember that the most relevant production the year offered to most people was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Yes, that old thing.

- **New play:** Forget-Me-Not Lane, by Peter Nichols.
- **New musical:** Godspell, by John Michael Tebelak and Stephen Schwartz.
- **Performance by an actor:** Ralph Richardson in West of Suez.
- **Performance by an actress:** Freda Dowie as Electra, at Greenwich.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Ben Kingsley as Gramsci in Occupations.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Helen Mirren in Miss Julie.
- **Production:** Frank Dunlop's of The Captain of Kopenick.
- **Set:** Farrah's for The Balcony.

FRANK MARCUS

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

ONCE AGAIN, the see-sawing fluctuations of fortune of the National and the RSC aroused much interest. The London branch of the RSC, reinforced by last year's successes—Brook's *Dream*, and *Exiles*—had a splendid season, which embraced their studio productions at The Place; the National had one of its worst years since its inception.

There was much good new work from our playwrights. Retrospection was the keynote. Nichols, Mortimer and Mercer looked back with pleasure and pain; so, more obliquely, did Pinter. Osborne showed serious concern in a conversation piece which ended with violent action. Bond's *Lear* was the most courageous play; Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* told me more about the South African tragedy than any number of editorials; *Old Times* seemed to me the one indisputable work

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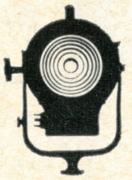

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of genius. The Storey-Anderson team reached another milestone in their quest for realism; Simon Gray made it at last with *Butley,* although I much preferred the earlier *Spoiled;* Hugh Leonard's farce, *The Patrick Pearse Motel* was unlucky in arriving at a time when things Irish were no longer deemed funny. A younger generation of writers appears to be crystallising. If *Lay By* is any indication —and I think it may be— they are clever, cool, and heartless, and so far indistinguishable. No doubt they will find their own voices in due course. The so-called avant-garde lay low, and musicals of any interest were conspicuous by their absence.

The World Theatre Season was exceptionally exciting, even by its own exalted standards, and the panoramic *1789* brought a breath of fresh air from France. Most of our senior luminaries shone brightly, notably Guinness, Ashcroft, Richardson, and Harry Andrews; Joan Greenwood was good, too. Badel's dashing Kean remained my favourite front-runner, followed closely by Sir Alec's impeccably observed blind barrister.

The ladies had a thin time, with the one and only Eileen Atkins banished to Guildford. The South African actress Yvonne Bryceland, standing six inches away from me, convinced me that she was a destitute, ill-used Cape coloured, and thus deserves my accolade. I shall feel forever grateful to Anna Calder-Marshall and Barbara Leigh-Hunt for gracing the revival of my play, *The Formation Dancers,* obviously I can't vote for them.

Looking back, it's really been rather a good year.

- **New play:** Old Times, by Harold Pinter.
- **New musical:** Catch My Soul, by Jack Good.
- **Performance by an actor:** Alan Badel in Kean.
- **Performance by an actress:** Yvonne Bryceland in Boesman and Lena.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Anthony Hopkins in Coriolanus.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Julia Foster in Lulu.
- **Production:** Victor Garcia's of The Maids (World Theatre Season).
- **Set:** Malcolm Pride's for Catch My Soul.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

NEW STATESMAN

THE COMMERCIAL THEATRE still in decline; the National in or near the doldrums; the Royal Court continuing to produce the most consistent flow of interesting new plays; the Royal Shakespeare Company consolidating its reputation as the most imaginative and exciting in the country; progress in the regions, including the appearance of impressive new theatres at Sheffield and Birmingham. In other words, it has been a mixed year, with marvellous highs (*Enemies,* my runner-up for best production; *Good Lads at Heart,* with which the Terson-Croft partnership at the National Youth Theatre surpassed even its own previous achievements) and dreadful lows (*Tyger,* the Mermaid *Othello, No Sex, Please—We're British, Dear Antoine).*

If Osborne did not excel, Pinter, Bond and Storey all did; and there were promising debuts by E A Whitehead, Peter Ransley, Trevor Griffiths and Tom Mallin. *The Foursome* was the best play by a previously unknown writer. I feel my choices for best actor and actress are somewhat unenterprising; but there seems no escape from them, given the extraordinary subtlety of Dame Peggy's murderess and the quality of achieved peace and wisdom projected by Sir John's Caesar. Other performances I shall long remember were Emrys James' Iago, Ian McKellen's uneven Hamlet, Ronald Pickup in *Danton's Death,* Alan Badel's Kean, Dorothy Tutin in *Old Times,* Anna Calder-Marshall in *The Formation Dancers* and *Caesar and Cleopatra,* John Wood in *Enemies,* Yvonne Bryceland in *Boesman and Lena,* Judi Dench's Duchess of Malfi, Helen Mirren's Miss Julie, Elizabeth Spriggs' Beatrice, and absolutely everyone in *The Changing Room.*

Given the high general level of British acting and the frequently high level of direction, what do we need? As always, bold and startling new writers; more social and political awareness, perhaps; more willingness to exploit new forms (*1789, Godspell, Rabelais* all came from abroad); and a boot up the arse for the National.

- **New play:** Old Times, by Harold Pinter.
- **New musical:** Catch My Soul, by Jack Good.
- **Performance by an actor:** John Gielgud in Caesar and Cleopatra.
- **Performance by an actress:** Peggy Ashcroft in The Lovers of Viorne.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Anthony Hopkins' work at the National.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Susan Fleetwood as Ophelia in Hamlet.
- **Production:** Lindsay Anderson's of The Changing Room.
- **Set:** David Cockayne's for Roll Me Over, at Birmingham Rep.

MILTON SHULMAN

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

PROBABLY THE MOST remarkable feature of 1971 was the fact that the expected breakthrough in nudity, obscenity and pornography on the stage did not take place. In Noel Coward's famous words, the West End was 'as clean as a whistle'.

Although the works of Harold Pinter, John Osborne, Edward Bond, David Storey and Alan Bennett could be seen, they represented respectable achievements rather than anything in the nature of a major development in their work. There also seems to have been a serious drying up of new writing talent in the West End.

The saddest decline was seen in the musical field, where most efforts in this genre were, to put it mildly, dreadful.

- **New play:** West of Suez, by John Osborne.
- **New musical:** no vote.
- **Performance by an actor:** Alan Bates in Butley.
- **Performance by an actress:** Peggy Ashcroft in The Lovers of Viorne.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Harry Andrews in Bond's Lear.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Yvonne Bryceland in Boesman and Lena.
- **Production:** Lindsay Anderson's of The Changing Room.
- **Set:** Farrah's for The Balcony.

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J C TREWIN

ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

A CREDITABLE YEAR: more substance, less braggadocio; several expert performances. The occasional silly caprice, of course, and some downright failures, but fewer of these. It has been cheering to watch the advance of Peter Nichols in *Forget-Me-Not Lane,* and David Storey in his transference of a Saturday afternoon in the North to the stage of the Royal Court *(The Changing Room).* Simon Gray's under-valued *Spoiled* was as good as the later *Butley*. Though I think Harold Pinter and John Osborne have done much better work than in *Old Times* and *West of Suez,* each of these had its author's quality, Pinter at his most compressed, Osborne at his most forthright. Only one genuinely exciting new writer emerged, Trevor Griffiths *(Occupations),* but a lot of talent is around.

Of the two major companies, the RSC had a happier year than the National. Each offered some redoubtable playing. From the National came the performance of 1971, Paul Scofield's as the ex-convict in *The Captain of Kopenick,* with that miraculously sustained grey drift of a voice, and I was glad of Joan Plowright's command as the wife in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness.* From the Royal Shakespeare's Stratford season, I remember especially Elizabeth Spriggs for the variously-expressed warmth and justice of her Beatrice and Emilia; Judi Dench for her Portia and Duchess of Malfi; Emrys James (for Iago rather than Shylock), and Richard Pasco for a Richard II that should have another showing. At the Aldwych, besides the Pinter, and Peter Brook's triumphantly magical direction of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the Stratford of 1970 (the play has not been spoken more subtly in our time), we had in particular Gorky's *Enemies,* an important rediscovery; *Exiles* (with John Wood), and the flamboyant theatricalism of *The Balcony*. I admired two experimental productions at The Place: *Miss Julie,* with Helen Mirren, and Trevor Griffiths' *Occupations,* about the Italian factory-workers' rising in 1920. The National had relatively little fortune in its West End season at the New—*The Rules of the Game* came through best—but during the Young Vic's lively year Ronald Pickup in *Measure for Measure* gave an Angelo no Shakespearean should have missed.

In the West End the most compelling plays were *Kean,* with the romantic swoop of Alan Badel; and two from Greenwich: *Forget-Me-Not Lane* and John Mortimer's *A Voyage Round My Father,* each a piece of family reminiscence. Of West End Hamlets, Ian McKellen's should grow when given a more sympathetic production with an unedited text. Sir Bernard Miles (Mermaid) did not waver in presenting the Miller production of *Prometheus Bound* (in Lowell's text). Outside London, Chichester did an atmospheric *Dear Antoine* which reached the Piccadilly; its director, Robin Phillips, had misplaced ideas about *Caesar and Cleopatra,* though the presence of Sir John Gielgud fortified the night. Provincial stages were aided by the opening of new Repertory buildings at Birmingham and Sheffield; Birmingham, I fear, did not honour the memory of Sir Barry Jackson —to whom, theatrically, the city has owed so much—by beginning with a feeble musical.

- **New play:** Forget-Me-Not Lane, by Peter Nichols.
- **New musical:** Catch My Soul, by Jack Good.
- **Performance by an actor:** Paul Scofield in The Captain of Kopenick.
- **Performance by an actress:** Elizabeth Spriggs as Beatrice and Emilia, at Stratford.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Ben Kingsley as Gramsci in Occupations.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Heather Canning as Christine in Miss Julie.
- **Production:** Lindsay Anderson's of The Changing Room.
- **Set:** Jocelyn Herbert's for A Woman Killed with Kindness.

IRVING WARDLE

THE TIMES

THE CHOICE is more than usually agonising this year, with *Old Times, Forget-Me-Not Lane,* Bond's *Lear, The Changing Room,* and *AC/DC* vying for first position among the new plays: and performances like Scofield's Kopenick, Joan Greenwood's Miss Madrigal, Emrys James' Iago, and Alan Bates' Butley all asserting separate pre-eminence. As for productions, I've excluded Brook's *Dream* on the technicality that it originally opened in 1970; but that still leaves outstanding work by John Dexter, Frank Dunlop, Pinter, and Michael Blakemore to choose from. It was, in short, a pretty rich year in terms of new plays and individual shows. Less good from the institutional point of view. Besides the National's well-publicised run of New Theatre flops (followed by their craven plea for yet more money from the Arts Council) there were other sad disparities between public expenditure and theatrical work: Birmingham and Sheffield opened lavish new houses, both pushing seat prices above the £1 level for the first time in the provinces, which their productions so far—a musical of *Pride and Prejudice* and a relentlessly mediocre *Peer Gynt*—have done nothing to justify.

The RSC had a good year in London, but their Stratford season (culminating in the cancelled *Timon*) has shown an increasingly literary bent. While Michael Croft, at the Shaw, seems to have exhausted his energy now he has at last found a home of his own (an exception must be made here for Ron Daniels' production of Terson's beautiful play *The Samaritan* at this theatre). The one main subsidised house fully to live up to its name was the Royal Court, upstairs and downstairs. Together with The Open Space, the Theatre Upstairs preserves the vital studio tradition; its atmosphere is a good deal friendlier than that of the Court itself, and acquiring it has developed a character of its own without any doctrinaire line, presenting material as various as *AC/DC,* music hall Brecht, and good new naturalistic work like the Claus/Logue *Friday*. Gaskill's production of Bond's *Lear* and Lindsay Anderson's superb collaboration with David Storey for *The Changing Room* upheld the reputation of the main auditorium. But perhaps the real test of the Court's quality is in Osborne's *West of Suez*. Old friends of the theatre were dismayed when this reactionary squib went up in Sloane Square: but once it moved into the West End it looked marvellous in the surrounding company. Sub-standard Court work still runs rings around most commercial productions.

- **Best play:** After Haggerty, by David Mercer.
- **Best musical:** Catch My Soul, by Jack Good.
- **Performance by an actor:** Ralph Richardson in West of Suez.
- **Performance by an actress:** Faith Brook as Gertrude in Hamlet.

- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Ben Kingsley for performances in Enemies, and Occupations.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Sara Kestelman for performances in Enemies, and Subject to Fits.
- **Production:** Lindsay Anderson's of The Changing Room.
- **Set:** Farrah's for The Balcony.

B A YOUNG

FINANCIAL TIMES

I COULDN'T include Peter Brook's *Dream* last year as I didn't see it until its final Stratford performance; this year it mustn't count, or it would have got my production and set votes.

Not a great year. The National below form (for which they have paid, alas); one will remember the Arrabal, and *A Woman Killed with Kindness,* and *Danton's Death.* Nothing much at Stratford, but interesting ideas abounding at the Aldwych. A fine *Caesar and Cleopatra* at Chichester. *La Ville* and *Les Bonnes* the best from the World Theatre Season. In *Butley,* Simon Gray has at last written a good play, and in *The Changing Room* David Storey has written his fifth good play.

Dullish Edinburgh; Dublin couldn't be dull, but was hardly memorable in spite of Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien. Best things out of town: Robert David Macdonald's *Tempest* at Leatherhead, Peter McEnery's production of *Richard III* at Nottingham. Most exciting thing anywhere: *1789* at the Roundhouse.

Good to see all the new theatres—the Shaw, the Crucible, the Birmingham Rep. Now let's see the new audiences to match.

- **New play:** The Changing Room, by David Storey.
- **New musical:** no vote.
- **Performance by an actor:** Alan Badel as Kean.
- **Performance by an actress:** Peggy Ashcroft in The Lovers of Viorne.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actor:** Christopher Benjamin as Broadbent in John Bull's Other Island.
- **Breakthrough performance by an actress:** Gemma Jones as Polly Oliver in Getting On.
- **Production:** Robin Phillips' of Caesar and Cleopatra.
- **Set:** Daphne Dare's for Miss Julie.

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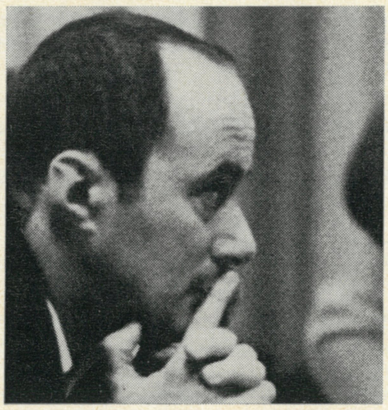
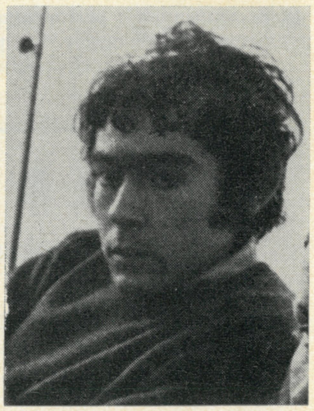
DIRECTION & DESIGN

THE PARTNERS





John Dexter and William Dudley talk to Robert Waterhouse
No 3: GOLDSMITH AND ALL THAT

IT IS A BITTER, prematurely dark Friday afternoon but in the Friars Hall, Blackfriars Road, the gas heaters are roaring, competing with interminable cries of 'London, London' from the cast of *The Good-Natured Man* who, coyly emerging from behind flats, are rehearsing the end of Act 1 on stage for the first time. Bits of scenery are whizzing up and down the tracks, a piece of precision engineering which allows them to be easily pushed by the actors, but priorities at this first rehearsal prove pretty difficult to sort out. In charge of the shunting is John Dexter, cheerfully authoritarian, while his designer, William Dudley, stands by to assure everyone that it does work if approached calmly. Dudley's set for this Goldsmith rarity, built to resemble two drawing rooms in Canonbury Square, Islington, is to be dismantled that night for reassembly at the Old Vic, where the only question is how the tracks will behave on the raked stage. For Dexter, this is his umpteenth production at the National; for Dudley, his first. How did it come about?

DEXTER: On *Tyger,* at the New, I suppose. Bill joined Jocelyn Herbert just after we'd started on the production and as I was looking for a designer I asked Jocelyn's advice—which is what I normally do. She said 'Why don't you talk to William?' So while we were working on *Tyger* I talked, without saying anything about this one. Then during the production weekends I gave Bill a script, without telling him anything about the play. When he'd read it I put forward some general ideas and passed the whole thing over to him.

DUDLEY: You wanted me to use a false floor, with some elements of scenery, so pictures were formed.

DEXTER: The reason for the floor, beginning a little way in from the extremities, is that the pros opening at the Vic is very wide and unless you bring your set in about three feet people in the side seats don't see too much. If you have a floor which restricts you instead of spreading all over the place, it becomes much more intimate. We did it in *A Woman killed with Kindness* and *Hobson's Choice.* I always seem to want to put a shape inside the Vic stage. The good thing about the Vic is that you're not too aware of where the audience ends and the pros begins because of that dark wood structure. But within this I wanted an intimate comedy played. I also wanted some elements of scenery which moved very lightly and fast, part of the action.

DUDLEY: Because I happened to be born in Islington I knew that Goldsmith lived there at the Canonbury Tower, so it was logical for the play to take place in Islington. One pair of lovers actually try to abscond to Gretna Green and Islington would have been their natural point of departure. Also, the play isn't in any way sordid or sinister, there's no viciousness, so it seemed right to get it away from the seedy Hogarth London to Islington, which is where people went for formal recreation in public gardens such as Sadlers Wells.

WATERHOUSE: *Almost in the country*?

DEXTER: Yes, there was green belt between London and Islington. So it was almost a village community, which helps us with the social relationship of the characters, the Crokers and Honeywoods; they're not city gentry but slightly suburban merchants, just outside the hub of London. One character in the play who is meant to be a man of influence but isn't, and wouldn't deceive anyone who knew his way around, seems more credible in this milieu.

WATERHOUSE: *Isn't it difficult to show that now, with Islington to most people being very nearly Central London*?

DUDLEY: We took a turn of the century engraving which shows St Pauls and the City seen across fields from Islington.

DEXTER: It's a postcard size back cloth just of that view, which should make it perfectly clear that there's London and here we are, two small houses removed from the city by green fields, cows and trees.

DUDLEY: Though there are other eighteenth century comedies which reflect the gentler side of life it was important to create this relaxed, Rowlandson feeling. It was the last phase before the Industrial Revolution really arrived; England was perhaps happier then than before or later.

WATERHOUSE: *You've put the play about* 15 *years forward in time*?

DEXTER: About 25. We've advanced it to 1786-7. It gives us a little more freedom with the eccentric characters, a more extreme look. But remember that when the play was first performed it was not popular because it was a bit too rough for its own period. Not the language, but it wasn't sentimental or genteel.

WATERHOUSE: *What was the history of production at the time*?

DEXTER: Disastrous. I can't go through it again, but any modern author sending his play to—you name the management—and the management thinking 'That's quite good' but then sitting on it and refusing to let anyone else do it—that was the setup. In this case it was David Garrick, who decided he could do it if the other part was cut down so that his part came out better. Goldsmith didn't want that, naturally, so he finally gave the play to another manager. Then Garrick went along and tried to stop the production: the theory is that Garrick had shown the script to the person writing his next play, who copied Goldsmith's juxtaposition of low life/high life. He didn't make it work very well but his play opened about two weeks before Goldsmith's and was an enormous success. When *The Good-Natured Man* itself opened it was going very well until the third act, what's called the bailiffs' scene, which the audience took violent exception to because it showed a gentleman trying to pass bailiffs off in his house as friends. It's a great comedy of manners scene—perhaps the equivalent is the tea party in *Pygmalion.* In fact, we've turned this into a tea party though Goldsmith didn't write it that way. It seems to play quite well. Anyway, that scene stuck in people's throats and the play never really recovered from it. The leading

man, Powell, didn't like the part of Honeywood, but then he was trying to play it as a very conventional juvenile lead with a great deal of romantic dash and if Honeywood is anything it's a portrait of Goldsmith himself. A bumbling, over-generous, clumsy, infuriating man who everyone had great affection for but couldn't stand. If you play Honeywood as a character part everything falls into place but if you make it a follow up of a Restoration hero the central scenes don't work.

WATERHOUSE: *What happened to the play after that*?

DEXTER: The bailiffs' scene was cut and it did quite well for Goldsmith, but the only major revival since was destined for the Vic with Robert Donat, Andrew Cruickshank, Sonia Dresdel, Connie Cummings, Max Adrian—it was quite a good cast—which opened at Buxton, but then the war came. Donat was apparently extraordinary as Croker and Guthrie's production was marvellous. If the war hadn't stopped it the play might have got more into theatre repertoire. It's a glorious actors' play, providing you don't give it that Sheridanesque gloss or even the feeling of Goldsmith in *She stoops to Conquer*. It's a much rougher, more boisterous piece.

WATERHOUSE: *These songs that you've brought in are fairly boisterous.*

DEXTER: Well, yes. But we used them to help the moving scenery along; these sort of plays are meant to be played consciously to an audience. You don't pretend that you're in a real room with real people. You have audience asides to deal with, so you can accept the whole artificial convention. Which is why I asked Bill to provide scenery that was interesting when changing.

DUDLEY: The other decision was that the two families could conceivably be next door neighbours—it would explain the free access they have to each others' houses. We took a little corner of Canonbury Square; the two houses are side by side and the flats that form the facade become the partitions that divide the houses. I wouldn't advise anyone to try and follow the logic of the architecture through, though—you see the furniture for one scene over the wall from the preceding scene and I hope that the two together have a kind of pictorial logic.

WATERHOUSE: *And moving flats are an eighteenth century device.*

DUDLEY: They changed scenery by sliding cut out flats along grooves. There was a top groove as well, though, and the flats were wing flats. We tried to imitate this light, unmechanical business of movement. If you can get actors to move the scenery without appearance of effort the whole thing becomes fluid.

DEXTER: Anyway, by the time we'd resolved the principle of the sliding scenery I was off to a small place I have in France. Bill joined me there with a quarter inch model he'd made, a travelling kit. We spent a week taking it apart and putting it together again, talking about costumes and looking at books while I was cutting the play and rearranging it—I've transposed a few scenes.

WATERHOUSE: *Was there much to do*?

DEXTER: I cut quite a lot. I transposed the opening exposition scene, which you don't need until later; this gives a better start and, incidentally, a day's unity. Dr Johnson originally wrote a prologue which also had to be killed after the first night because it was extremely depressing, and spoken in an extremely depressing manner by one of the junior actors—and the epilogue wasn't much better.

WATERHOUSE: *Was it very moral*?

DEXTER: Very. Later with *She Stoops* Goldsmith had about four attempts at prologues and epilogues because the lady playing Mrs Hardcastle said *she* always did epilogues while Goldsmith preferred the lady playing Kate Hardcastle because she was younger and prettier. So he devised an epilogue in which two ladies quarrelled over who was going to do the epilogue—one of them spoke, the other one sang it, which was successful. I felt *Good-Natured Man* really needed an epilogue to round things off so I took this other one, cut it down, changed some lines. There's a prologue for *She Stoops* which was never used, about the magic, resuscitating powers of the stage, so I took some of that and, finally, two lines from the original epilogue.

WATERHOUSE: *I would have thought that, boring prologue or not, Dr Johnson would have approved of the spirit of the play.*

DEXTER: He loved it. He certainly had a lot in common with Goldsmith.

WATERHOUSE: *The songs you've inserted are genuine London ones*?

DEXTER: Yes. There's the 'Bailiff's daughter of Islington'; the middle one, the bit of cod Mozart, is a William Cowper poem about London; and the 'Ratcatcher' is one of A L Lloyd's which doesn't specifically refer to Islington. The last change has to be really boisterous because the play climbs towards an extremity of humour.

DUDLEY: When we got round to costumes we tried to set it even later, around 1800.

DEXTER: We thought that Jane Austen would be rather nice, but she proved *too* rather nice.

WATERHOUSE: *And there were references to people going to Paris.*

DEXTER: Yes, the French Revolution would have run them out of court.

WATERHOUSE: *But you're only just before the revolution.*

DEXTER: Only just.

DUDLEY: The women's costumes of the 1780s are particularly handsome; they have an elegant line, very different from the confections of the 'sixties and 'seventies.

WATERHOUSE: *Is precise period important with a classic*?

DEXTER: It is to begin with, when you're discussing your approach; but not really for the audience. You've got to have exact details in your head when you begin, and the more outrageous the comedy is the more necessary it is to be absolutely truthful about all the details.

WATERHOUSE: *This appeals to you more than, for instance, taking a classic out of time*?

DEXTER: Yes. I've never seen that idea work really satisfactorily. Brook did the *Dream* beautifully, but there he's not just taking it out of time he's doing a completely new thing.

DUDLEY: The worst approach is the parallel one, where you retain all the mechanics of the production and then try to find equivalents.

DEXTER: The trouble is that you're always stuck with the language and the language is never true out of its period. We changed the date slightly on this particular play to make it less grand, more bourgeois.

DUDLEY: Most of the visual ephemera of the period—engravings etc—have a quality of light which effects their whole tone. Hogarth, for example, is dark and rich but in this slightly later period Rowlandson has clear light coming through, a much happier feeling.

WATERHOUSE: *Why do you both talk in terms of the cartoonists when describing your understanding of the period*?

DEXTER: The apposite visual references are to be found in the cartoons, not in the paintings of Gainsborough or Romney. Gillray, Hogarth and Rowlandson do give you a flavour of how ordinary people lived. The grand painters are no use for *She Stoops* either, and I think Jonathan Miller proved at Nottingham that they are equally useless for *School for Scandal*. The cartoonists give you the useful photographic detail—the birdcage in the corner, the print in the shop window. This kind of detail helps the acting, too. For instance, there's a bit in the play about folding a letter. So we've had to go back and find out just how letters were folded then.

DUDLEY: What comes out of these cartoons is that the middle class of the time were beginning to clutter up their houses with objects, overdress their rooms, collect clutter. Perhaps this was the result of industry gearing up to mass production. There are some Cruickshank drawings which you would swear were Victorian if it weren't for the graphic style and the dress of the figures. All this clutter obviously musn't take over on stage, but it's very useful to introduce since it reflects the characters' status so well.

DEXTER: To get back to the set itself; in September you took the model to the workshops and had it costed. At the same time they did a rough one track groove version just to see what modifications had to be made. It was apparent that we were going to hit the budget. This was crucial; directors and designers in general are far too irresponsible about money, which a little bit more time could often save. You're bound to hit snags which need money to iron out, but you can't say 'Oh, we'll work that out

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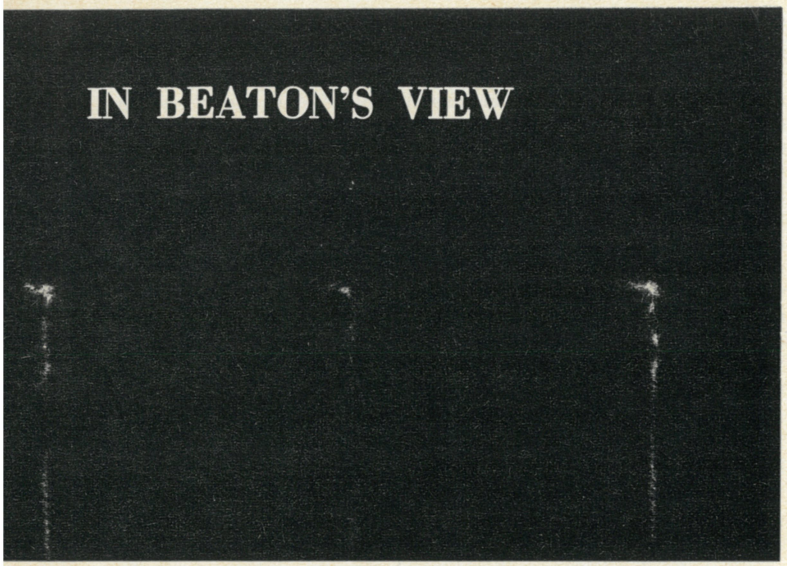
IN BEATON'S VIEW



NUMBER ONE IRENE WORTH

THAT SUCH AN ACTRESS as Irene Worth, with her depth and freedom of expression and dazzling intelligence, should not be cherished as one of the greatest ornaments to the English stage is a murky mystery. Clive Barnes has written of her as 'one of the most illuminating actresses of the English-speaking theatre', while Walter Kerr has it that she 'is just possibly the best actress in the world'. Ronald Bryden considered 'no-one has expressed Shaw's image of the Eternal Feminine more exactly'; and Peter Roberts 'her exceedingly glamorous and effortlessly commanding Mrs Hushabye . . . she seems to take Shaw's dialogue on the palm of her hand and blow it out into the auditorium like a feather'.

Although London is her home, English audiences see her seldom. It is iniquitous that she has played only less than fifty performances at our National Theatre since Olivier became its head. We are parched for wonderful performances in wonderful plays, and since we are so short on great leading ladies, why have we been deprived of seeing Irene Worth as Hedda, or as Silia Gala in *The Rules of the Game*? Why has she not been given the opportunity to play Ibsen, Turgenev, or Chekhov? Wouldn't it be exciting if, under a different director, the new National Theatre building, scheduled for 1973, should be inaugurated with Irene Worth playing Cleopatra? She alone with her imagination and originality, her extraordiary range of voice, her strength, her powers of projection could do justice to the infinite varieties of seduction necessary for this most difficult of roles.

Other theatrical managements without a thought but for the weekly receipts have whined: 'Is she "Box Office"?' But how can any actress become 'Box Office' if she is rarely seen? Some have complained that she is difficult. Most creative artists are invariably difficult, but that is surely an irrelevance. All that matters is the performance. No doubt Bernhardt was difficult.

In fact Irene Worth is not difficult. She is a perfectionist. She wishes anything with which she is involved to be under the best auspices. Once she has made up her mind to dedicate herself to creating a new role, she is totally professional. Although she trusts that the director will 'allow the yeast to make a good loaf', she will take his instructions implicity even if she feels instinctively that he is at times at fault. Before the active preparations for each production she finds time to do a connoisseur's research, reading all possible relevant books on the subject, visiting museums, and limbering up in gymnasiums and taking fencing lessons. If the play is a period one, in order to get the feel and the stance necessary to wear the clothes, not only does she study all possible pictorial documents of the epoch, but entices museum curators to bring out their costumes so that she can learn the cut and feel the texture of the stuffs.

It was when, at Swiss Cottage, Irene Worth gave grace and distinction to a tiresome war-play by Virginia Cowles and Martha Gellhorn that I knew that here was a rare theatre newcomer. In the original production of *The Cocktail Party* in New York she had the opportunity to show her unique talent as a speaker of prose-poetry. Although she was acclaimed by all the critics, when the play came to London she was not at first in the cast. Another New York success in Schiller's *Mary Stuart* brought her to the Old Vic in a translation by Stephen Spender. In *The Queen and the Rebels* by Ugo Betti, and translated for her by Henry Reed, she showed herself star stuff. In Durenmatt's *Physicists,* even in a part so alien to her as that of the hunchback Swiss doctor, to quote a critic 'she could take a role and wrap it around her own soul'. In the Coward plays *Suite in Three Keys* she played three parts of complete diversity, and as the brash, blue-haired American her sense of comedy and caricature was astonishing. In *Heartbreak House* she made Dame Edith's earlier Mrs Hushabye seem a mere sketch for the part in comparison to the extremely rich portrait she created. By the sheer force of her personality, and her physical prowess she gave a cohesion to the entire production of Brook's *Oedipus.*

She has not appeared on the London stage since returning over a year ago from Ontario where the critics wrote: 'The big things she does in Hedda are staggering in their arrogance and the authority with which that arrogance is supported.' 'The fires of her intelligence are burning all the time.'

Irene Worth is a dedicated player who will sacrifice comfort or salary to appear in interesting plays as, when Coventry was still a ruined city, she worked with the Repertory in a rickety old barn, or travelled miles by bus to distant theatres. She will willingly perform in a tent—as she did at the inauguration of the Stratford Theatre in Ontario—if she considers the project worthwhile. She will gladly endure the winter cold of Finland or Russia, the dust storms and summer heat of Persepolis, if she considers that she is learning something that will be valuable to her career. 'The best academy is experience,' she says.

Irene Worth is one of the rare intellectual actresses. She started life as a kindergarten teacher with a degree in education. Then she trained as a pianist, and her love of music has never left her. She can speak several languages, has a great knowledge of literature, and her vistas of interest and taste stretch far in many directions. These attributes only add to her mien, and when she comes on stage the audience knows it is in the presence of someone quite special. Irene Worth has a quality that can make pigmies of others. Thespian jealousies and pettinesses are outside her range, but when she is deceived by others with motives less lofty than her own, she is sadly shocked. She is herself most generous to her fellow performers, and considers that actors should perform for the others in the cast and not for the audience. The stars with whom she has an affinity are Scofield, Gielgud, Finney, and David Warner, ('Acting with him is like swimming in silk').

From the performances she has already given we know how well she could play Pinter, Beckett (*Happy Days* in particular), Wilde and Pirandello. It would be good to see her as *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* or raise the standard of musicals. (She is in excellent voice just now.) But while still hoping for these opportunities we must content ourselves that she is to appear next spring in a new play by Frank Marcus, *Notes On A Love Affair,* directed by the brilliant young Robin Phillips. If no suitable offer arrives for her to prove an unassailable position in the great classics, then she must be goaded to become her own manager, run her own repertoire, and show what greatness she has attained in the height of her maturity. It might well be that, by so doing, she would not only show herself again to be invincible as a great actress, but also become the enlightened theatrical impresario that the London stage at the moment so sadly lacks.

CECIL BEATON

Picture of Irene Worth by Cecil Beaton

KEEP IT MUM

Above: Constance Cummings has recently played a modern and classical mum for the National. Earlier this year she was Coriolanus' iron-clad mother at the Old Vic and, currently, is the destructive mum in O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night at the New

CONSTANCE CUMMINGS JOAN HICKSON GWEN NELSON AND MONA WASHBOURNE talk to MARGARET TIERNEY

'MOTHER' has been a major figure on the stage since the first Greek actors put on masks. And as she has appeared through her children's eyes she has generally represented a problem. The numbers of characters whose troubles can be traced back to some action on the part of their mothers is huge, and increases the further back you go.

Oedipus, of course, started it, with the mother-problem to end all mother-problems. Phaedra was another lady in the Jocasta mould. Without being exactly a mother she was certainly 'in loco parentis'. That was just her trouble. In fact Greek and Roman mothers had a field day, generally when their husbands were off fighting each other. Clytemnestra's daughter knew all about that.

Shakespeare took up the theme. Hamlet had mother-trouble, so did Juliet. So, in a different way, did Bertram in *All's Well That Ends Well*. A kindly lady, the Countess, and a doting parent, but couldn't resist arranging his life for him. Neither could Coriolanus' mother, though in less fond fashion. ('To a cruel war I sent him . . . I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a man-child, than now at first seeing he had proved himself a man'.)

Shakespeare also provides some examples of characters whose 'mother-problem' was that they didn't have one. Miranda, Hermia, Portia and Cordelia could each have done with a mother to bring father down to earth when he got a bit fanciful.

He also hinted at the extent of her influence by creating characters whose behaviour makes us wonder what their mothers could possibly have been like. Was Leontes' mother a wanton, and had Isabella's seen something nasty in the woodshed? And what was it in the Queen of Navarre to make her son Ferdinand issue his edict: 'If any man be seen to talk with a woman within the term of three years, he shall endure such public shame as the rest of the court shall possibly devise'?

Perhaps she was a bit like Shaw's Mrs Higgins, who seems to have produced a similar affect on Henry, another man who preferred books to women. Mrs Higgins is also interesting in being one of the few notable Mother-parts that Shaw wrote. Himself the son of a forceful mother he seems to have shrunk from the task of putting her into his work. His powerful women are generally young and unmarried, and make you shudder for their unborn children. (Could there be a worse fate than being born to Mrs Ann Tanner, nee Whitefield?).

Mothers, of course, exist in Shaw's plays, but apart from Mrs Warren and Mrs Clandon they're not the sturdy independent ladies of earlier drama. At this point Mother seems to be losing her power. Her arc has passed its peak and is dipping.

Oscar Wilde provides her last hour of glory. Lady Bracknell is the last of the great warrior-mothers. In fact she's really Volumnia in a bustle, guiding her off-spring in the 'cruel war' of the Edwardian marriage-mart with as much iron will as Volumnia guided hers onto a different battle-field.

But Lady Bracknell was Indian summer. After that the trappings of social power gradually diminished, and Mother with them. The

Top: Joan Hickson, who has just finished playing Peter Nichols' autobiographical mum in Forget-Me-Not Lane at the Apollo. Below: Gwen Nelson, the original working-class mum of Roots and Saved at the Royal Court

kitchen, not the drawing-room, became the arena. Mother largely disappeared and was replaced by Mum.

Of the four stage mothers who talked to me three had played mainly or entirely outside the classics. Gwen Nelson has a Lady Bracknell under her belt, but will be remembered more for the uneducated, narrow-minded working-class Mums she created in *Roots* and *Saved*. Joan Hickson has just finished playing Mum in *Forget-Me-Not-Lane* and when we talked was genning up on a script for a television play in which she plays—guess what?

'I've never done the classic mothers,' she said. 'I wish I had. I've done mainly farce. Even now I don't play mothers a great deal. I tend to get offered chars and landladies. They probably have children, but you never hear about them.'

Mona Washbourne also regretted that her career had been short on classics.

'I've never done Shakespeare, which is a terrible thing to have to admit. But physically I'm not right for the statuesque mothers. I'm short and fat and jolly and don't have the grandeur. I couldn't do the Mum in *Coriolanus*. I'm just not built for it. And I'm not a Lady Capulet or a Gertrude.'

Of the four it is Constance Cummings who represents grandeur, having played both Gertrude and recently 'the Mum in *Coriolanus*'. But her current play for the National Theatre is O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Here the mother is cast in the modern, weaker mould. With a foot in both camps she was in a good position for comparisons.

'The mother in *Journey* is really O'Neill's own mother, and we've all done a lot of reading up on his background and childhood. I think she was probably a rather nice, not very bright woman, who should have been a small-time Mum with a conventional home and conventional children. (I'm talking now about the actual woman, not the part, although it's really the same thing.) In fact she married an actor and lived a very unconventional life. She was dragged around from hotel to hotel with a husband who drank and stayed out late, and she was simply out of her depth.

'In many ways the shape of the play is like that of a Greek tragedy, except that it's the mother's weakness and inadequacy that contributes to the tragedy and partial downfall of her sons. Coriolanus, on the other hand, was the victim of a mother who had an iron-clad ideal about how her son, as a member of the ruling-class, should conduct himself. She caused his downfall by being too powerful.

'So it's true to say that the mother-figure has changed from power to weakness, but I think it's also true of *men* on the stage. I think playwrights are far more concerned with inadequate people, no matter what sex they are.'

A lot of Mother's one-time power came with her social position. Strong because her husband was probably a king, she became even stronger when he went to war leaving her to rule the roost. Nowadays royalty is 'out', shabby suburbia is 'in'. Constance Cummings thought Mum had lost some of her influence when she stopped being wealthy and was relegated to the kitchen.

'When I first went on the stage plays were more about rich, society people. It just wasn't fashionable to write about what went on in small kitchens in suburbia. Then the more naturalistic theatre came in and you saw different Mums in a more restricted setting.'

Gwen Nelson made a similar point. Much of the impact of her *Roots* mother sprang from the fact that Act II took place in her own kitchen, a totally naturalistic set in which she was never still.

'Life went on *all* the time,' she said 'The audience saw the mother cooking, cleaning, serving lunch, sweeping the floor. She never stopped working. She never sat about and talked. Then, in the tea-party when she had to, it was a complete failure because she'd never discussed anything before in her life.'

She has played this role in just about every major production of the play. At the time she identified with the part so closely that when Wesker wanted to make a very slight alteration to her eventual outburst in Act II, she fought him.

'To me that speech was really classic writing. Wesker wanted to put about four words in which would have made her sound as though she were excusing herself. We fought and fought. I said he didn't know how beautifully he'd written the speech and if he put those words in it would weaken her.'

Like many actresses with a large repertoire of mother roles she has come across Mums who are not characters in their own right so much as walking explanations for the hero's behaviour.

'So often she's there as an excuse. She's muffled him, or driven him on. And when you play a lot of character parts you get used to being *very* something—very fat or very thin, very kind, very horrid, or very domineering, and that was why Beattie's mother was so marvellous. She was an individual. Of course she was dull and stubborn, but within that stubborn-ness there was a whole range of colours.

'I felt the same about the mother in *Saved*. It was a very tricky part because it was written in three "tiers". In the first act she was just a lump staring at television and talking in monosyllables. We went on for pages just saying "Yes" or "No". It was murder to learn.

'In the second act she develops, and has a rather flirtatious

Above: Mona Washbourne, who has played 'all sorts and sizes of Mums', can currently be seen as the mother-in-law in Alan Bennett's comedy Getting On, at the Queen's

scene with her daughter's boy-friend, so you have to hint at this streak in her character in Act I, through the lumpishness. In Act III she's an entirely different woman. She becomes a virago. Then after she's smashed the tea-pot over her husband's head during a row, everybody subsides and goes back to not talking. It was a lot more interesting to do than the kind of Mum who has only a narrow range of characteristics.'

Mona Washbourne felt the same. Her Mum career has been as long as Gwen Nelson's, perhaps longer, because she can remember being cast as mothers almost from the beginning.

'All sorts and sizes of Mums. Even when I was young I had to put on a grey wig and be at least thirty years older than I was.'

Like Gwen Nelson she has two particularly outstanding mothers in her repertoire. *Billy Liar* and *The Anniversary* both provided her with the chance to 'get away from ordinary sweet Mums'.

'Billy's mother was a curious, mixed-up character. She was a rather dull, stupid woman, very good at heart, but quite incapable of understanding his fantasies. She could only follow the obvious. She adored Billy, yet in a strange way his romancing left her completely devoid of feeling for him, so that she became irritated and beastly to him.'

She responds well to young actors—a major requisite for an actress with a large Mum-repertoire—and at no time was this better shown than when Albert Finney left the cast and Tom Courtenay took over the role of Billy.

'He had quite a different personality. Albert was stocky and definite. Tom was vague and rather defenceless. That brought down my defences, and I found myself having to alter my reading of the part. It was rather an interesting exercise.'

She talks of *The Anniversary* with a relish that at first comes strangely from someone whose strongest weapon is warmth.

'Well I'm not good at the stern matriarch-type. I'm too vulnerable and I've no streak of cruelty. But that woman didn't rule her children like a matriarch, with a rod of iron. She did it in a subtle, evil, cunning way, and with such charm on the surface. She wouldn't cut the umbilical cord and let any of them go. She was determined to keep them by fair means or foul, mostly foul. She told such lies, and got away with it until the end when they all took fright and went. But it was such fun playing an evil Mum. I *loved* it.'

Having created the role she had to sit by and watch the film version go to Bette Davies, a sad experience that actually ended quite cheerfully for her. So many critics preferred her performance and said so in print that for weeks after the film's opening friends approached her with the words, 'I must congratulate you on your notices for Bette Davies' performance in *The Anniversary*.'

Of the four actresses it is paradoxically Mona Washbourne and Gwen Nelson who have no children. Paradoxically, because between them they have probably notched up the most mothers as mothers (as opposed to characters like Joan Hickson's chars who probably have children in some remote off-stage region). One critic described Mona Washbourne as 'the universal mother'.

'I've always been too busy to have children,' she said. 'I don't really regret it because bearing children is one form of expressing a creative instinct, and I create parts instead.'

Joan Hickson, a grandmother, said that neither of her two children stampeded to see Mum in action.

'My daughter lives in Malta. My son came to the first night of *Forget-Me-Not-Lane*, but usually it's a case of "Mother's doing her job." They never compare my stage mothers to my real self. I've never been asked to play the sort of mother I am, and in any case one never plays the same as one is in real life, ever.'

Mona Washbourne disagreed: 'I find Enid, in *Getting On* a fascinating character because there's a lot of me in her. She's an artistic person, who always wanted to paint. Marriage didn't satisfy her completely. She has a searching mind, and wants to learn things. It's rather a "Women's Lib" situation.'

Joan Hickson has the slightly eerie experience of playing the same mother in two different plays and finding her a different person in each one. Five years ago she created the role of the mother in Peter Nichols' partly autobiographical play *A Day In The Death of Joe Egg*, which the author has recently revived under his own direction at Greenwich. *Forget-Me-Not Lane* also had a strong autobiographical slant, and if you follow the mothers back far enough the paths join and become Peter Nichols' own mother.

'Which is very odd,' said Joan Hickson, 'because she's quite different in each play. Of course you see a lot more of her in *Forget-Me-Not Lane*. You see her at different ages and with more variety of mood. In *Joe Egg* she had just one mood. She had only one scene where she was already at the end of her life. She was lonely, her husband had already died. She talked about him, but you didn't see the interaction between them as you do in *Forget-Me-Not Lane*.

'Peter Nichols' talked to me about her a lot during rehearsals. I've never met her but I feel I know her very well. I suppose in the later play he wrote her as a kind of concentrated picture of everyone's Mum, but she's still very much an individual. She's not just a mother "type".

'But to me none of them are "types", even if they have recognisable mother characteristics. Each one is quite different from the others. One reason I wanted to do *First Edition* (the TV play she was rehearsing) was because the mother in that is such a contrast to the one I've just finished.'

Constance Cummings agreed: 'I don't think there is such a thing as a type. Or if there is then it's a very low order of writing. If I ever see a cast list with "The Man", "The Woman" etc my heart sinks because I feel there is no such thing as "The Man". There is a specific man, and you must write specifically about him, however universal the implications are.

'Look at the Jewish mother in Clifford Odets' *Awake and Sing*. She's always saying to her children "Eat, eat more" and worrying about them and their jobs and everything that happened to them. I first saw this play in New York which has a high percentage of Jews in the population, and therefore in audiences. And this woman made an immediate impact because they recognised her as a kind of archetype with a lot of the characteristics of a very busy, loving worried Jewish mother.'

Yet even in her most individual moments the Mother has something that sets her apart, a pattern of action that makes Jocasta and Mrs Bryant two sides of the same coin. Gwen Nelson and Mona Washbourne summed up in almost the same words.

'Love for her children,' said Gwen Nelson. 'Sometimes it gets warped. The mother in *The Silver Cord* had a twisted love for her children which led her to prevent one son from marrying and smashed the marriage of the other son. But the main-spring is love.'

'Mother-love,' said Mona Washbourne without hesitation, 'in whatever form it is expressed. Billy Liar's mother was often beastly to him, but there was still a great maternal love there. And I think the over-all pattern of motherhood and maternal feeling is the same from the beginning to the end for ever.'

The Critics

Something's happening in the arts all the time and, whatever happens, The Observer covers it.

Malcolm Muggeridge, Bernard Levin, Philip Toynbee and Roy Jenkins are book critics; George Melly goes to the cinema; Benny Green listens to jazz; Tony Palmer on the pop scene; Nigel Gosling appreciates art; Peter Heyworth likes going to concerts; Stephen Gardiner is an expert on architecture; Alexander Bland is a ballet buff; Mary Holland keeps an eye on the telly; Paul Ferris listens to the radio; and Helen Dawson goes out to the living theatre.

Read The Critics in

THE OBSERVER

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NEW YORK

CATHARINE HUGHES

THESE DAYS, I seem to be spending much of my time commuting between the New York Shakespeare Festival's Public Theatre and Lincoln Center. Which, in a month that's included little beyond a sorry assortment of mediocre musicals—plus *Old Times,* which looks to be our annual intellectual hit—probably isn't such a bad idea.

Above: Scene from The Black Terror, a revolutionary adventure story by Richard Wesley. A New Shakespeare Festival Theatre production at the Other Stage

Where the commercial theatre is concerned, I feel a bit like a mortician, at least an observer at a wake, since several if not most of the shows I dutifully saw and intended to write about—among them musical versions of Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* and Truman Capote's *The Grass Harp* and a dramatisation of three Philip Roth short stories, *Unlikely Heroes*—have not just come but gone. As the box office man said, 'There's no power on earth that can keep the public from staying home.'

Before getting on to some of the less happy events, however, there are the season's first two entries at the Public Theatre, both auspicious and both a confirmation that Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival has become the single most vital and creative force in the American theatre.

Late in *The Black Terror,* a member of the guerilla American Liberation Front challenges his leader: 'Suppose the people don't want a revolution?' It's a question you somehow don't expect to hear these days, not in a play by a young black writer, with a black director and an all-black cast. But, then, there are many things you—whether you are black or white—don't expect to hear in twenty-seven-year-old Richard Wesley's powerful and unstereotyped new play.

The Black Terror is set in what the programme describes as 'the very near future given the nature of American society.' Keusi, recently back from Vietnam, where he has become a proficient killer, is assigned the job of assassinating the police chief. Although he has doubts about murder as a revolutionary weapon, he carries it out to the organisation's if not his own satisfaction.

In the course of the planning, he lives with M'Bahlia, who has broken away from her middle-class black background in favour of a career as a revolutionary. 'I'm a black terrorist, sex isn't a thing with me,' she tells Keusi, who anything but shares the feeling.

Although Keusi has committed his assassination, he remains disturbed about the organisation's emphasis on killing and the quality of its leadership. Who, after all, is to decide who's to live and who's to die? Who is to decide who is a revolutionary and who is simply 'an angry brother with a gun'? Isn't it better to 'offer our people life and not more death'? Should blacks kill other blacks?

The questions arise when he is told to kill a moderate black leader who has denounced violence and terrorism, and Keusi is suspended from the organisation. In his place, M'Bahlia is given the assignment. For her, killing is a perfectly acceptable, even an admirable weapon in the struggle. Even when, as it turns out, the victim is to be her own father.

Wesley's heart is with the revolution, of course, and—unless I misinterpret—with its violent pursuit if it is only through violence that it can succeed. But he recognises the other side (and it, in fact, benefits from many of his best lines). Although the play ends with M'Bahlia's father sprawled dead in his study, the headquarters of the movement raided, rioting in the streets and the lines, 'If it's madness we're into, then it's madness that will change the world,' it is a more multi-faceted—and in its way more balanced—presentation of the varying views within the black community than any I have seen. (I admit, of course, that I can write only as a white critic.) It refuses to simplify. I doubt it will leave anyone completely satisfied and that, I think, is a testament to its impact.

It is an impact that gains immeasurably from Nathan George's taut and at times explosive—literally—production and from almost universally excellent performances, especially from Kain as Keusi and Susan Batson as M'Bahlia. It is, quite simply, the most consistently powerful and compelling black drama I have seen.

I don't know exactly what to say about David Rabe's *Sticks and Bones,* also at the Public Theatre. It is far inferior to the thirty-one-year-old playwright's *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel* (August 1971 *P&P*). But then, Pavlo was not only the best off Broadway play of last season, it is the best running there today. Inevitably, Rabe was in one of those what'll-you-do-for-an-encore situations.

As an answer, *Sticks and Bones*—which I have a nagging suspicion may have been written earlier—is only partially satisfactory. It displays many of the same concerns, especially with Vietnam and what it has done to the participants and what it reflects of their values and sensibilities, and much of the same power. But, unlike *Pavlo,* its focus is erratic, its style uncertain—a mixture of menace and melodrama, satirised soap opera and savage insistence.

It is August 1968 and the family of a young soldier has just learned that he is about to return home from Vietnam. They are Middle America personified; concerned with their possessions, the wife an avid churchgoer, the husband at least mildly frustrated with the course his life has taken, the son a guitar-toting extrovert with sex on his mind. In other words, not what anyone would call 'bad' people, perhaps only painfully average in their desire for security, happiness and continuity.

David's appearance shatters their complacency, for David is not only blind, he is embittered. Not over his blindness, but over what he *has* seen and especially over what he has left behind: a girl he loved and wanted to bring back home with him, but who is there only in his dreams and fantasies. The family he finds means nothing to him, in fact epitomises all he has come to hate and scorn.

It is a bitterness and a scorn that the family itself cannot comprehend—and it is one of the play's major weaknesses that Rabe never really makes it rational or

comprehensible to the audience either. If they can see only that he is 'troubled, deeply troubled'—as his mother tells a priest she calls upon for advice—the audience, too, is left only fragments of the reasons and an absent core.

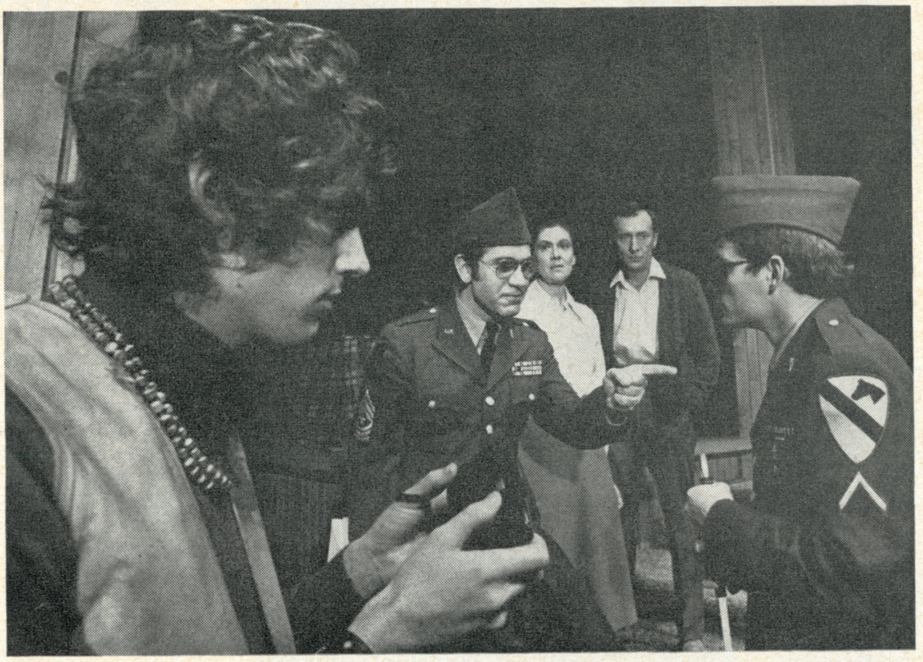
Running parallel to David's torment is his father's. It is quieter—a quiet desperation, if you will—and he has been able to suppress it until now, to live with the fact that he 'grew too old too quickly' and that there is 'no evidence in the world of me.'

David will not permit him to submerge his wounds any longer, not any more than he will let his well-meaning if rather vapid mother attempt to talk to him or the hearty priest—a caricature, not a character—to counsel him. His mother he accosts with his cane; the priest he drives off with it.

All the while, a white-gowned Vietnamese girl moves back and forth from upstairs bedroom to living room: the 'yellow whore' of his parent's racist fears and accusations, the girl he loved and left behind. And, of course, he tells them, forces them to listen to, things they do not want to hear, tales of massacres ('They were all just hunks of meat').

With Robert Montgomery (*Subject to Fits,* also first produced at the Public Theatre, more recently in London as part of the RSC's experimental season), Rabe is one of the two or three most interesting—and at times exciting—young playwrights to emerge in recent years. But in *Sticks and Bones* he is not fully in control of his material and some of the maudlin philosophising he assigns to the father clearly belonged in another play. So, unfortunately, did the ending. Unlike the 'blood' that spurts forth, the family's eagerness to assist David to commit suicide and the 'return to normalcy' it is suggested this will bring, just won't wash. Not even as allegory, not even as metaphor. It demands too much of our credibility. Even so, one can't deny the play's erratic power and black humour or its ability to evoke a sense of moral outrage. Perhaps it is merely ungrateful to ask of it anything more.

At Lincoln Center, there are two happy notes (neither, I regret to say, the Repertory Theatre's first two productions). The first is the fact that all those plans to take over the company's experimental Forum for assorted film theatres and the various other movie-oriented transgressions I have reported on are, at worst, in a state of suspended animation, more likely aborted, thanks largely to a concerted effort in virtually every sector of the New York theatre community. Also on the cheerful side is the RT's launching of a new 'Explorations' programme in the Forum, which (to quote from the press release), 'will be dedicated primarily to experimental and germinal works by emerging and previously undiscovered playwrights, directors and choreographers.' Since critics have been asked not to write about the productions, I will say only that the first offering, two one-acts collectively titled *Kool Aid* and written by a young Brooklyn playwright, Merle Molofsky, were a promising beginning.



Top: People Are Living There by Athol Fugard at The Forum—a Lincoln Center production by John Berry. Below: David Rabe's Sticks and Stones presented by the New York Shakespeare Festival at the Anspacher Theater

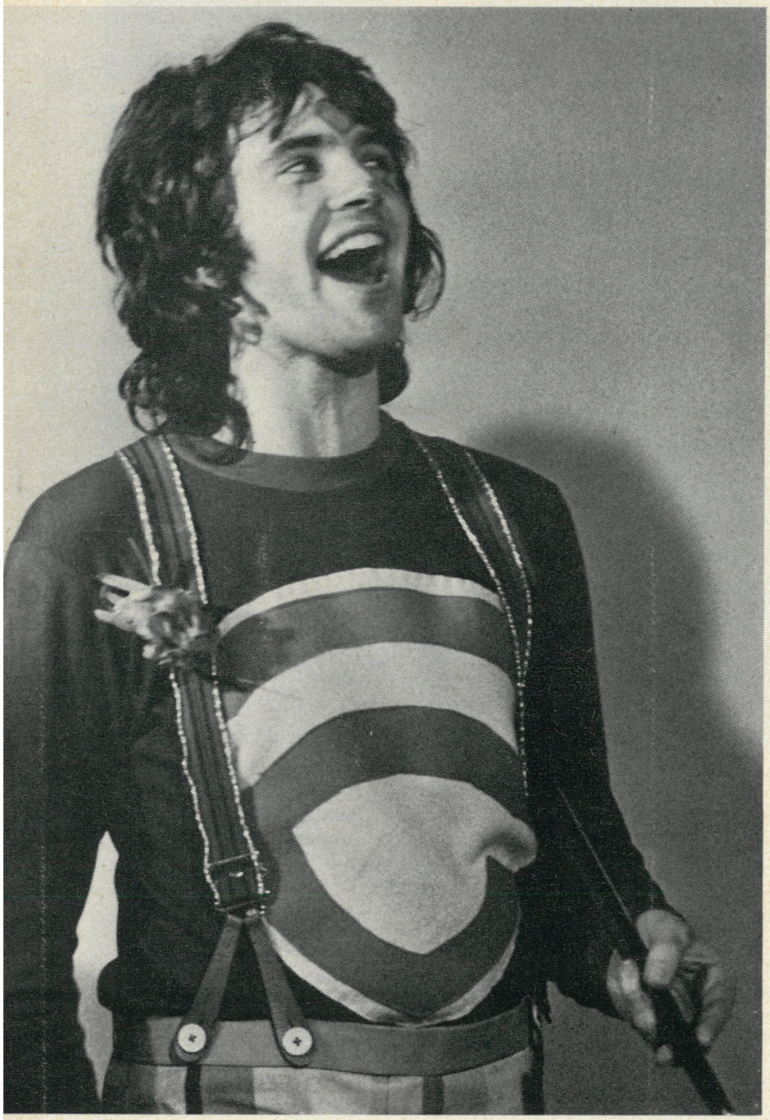
There is nothing even that positive to be said of the RT's first production on its Vivian Beaumont mainstage. Only a fool would suggest that Schiller's *Mary Stuart* is an easy play to stage or perform, but that's hardly an excuse for the consistent mediocrity of Jules Irving's production. Mr Irving—who, I concede, may be in the unhappy position of having to pay more attention to politics than to plays these days—seems, as he occasionally has in the past—to have had little reason for 'doing' the play other than the doing. It is flat and unimaginative, with no fresh insights into Schiller (here in the Stephen Spender version) and certainly none into the contention between Mary and Elizabeth. Worse yet, there is absolutely no vitality or other than cardboard conflict to it. Everyone moves about in textbook-perfect blocking and the Schiller-

(*to page* 90)

ROUNDHOUSE

GODSPELL

REVIEWER ROBERT CUSHMAN



Above: David Essex as Godspell's Jesus-as-Clown and, opposite page, members of the ten-strong company (l to r) Verity-Anne Meldrum, Neil Fitzwilliam, Tom Saffery, Marti Webb and Deryk Parkin (centre front)

IT HAS BEEN PROVED, as conclusively as these things can be, that Christianity and tragedy are incompatible. The faith has, however, continued to nourish other forms of drama, for it is a religion formed of paradox and paradox is the lifeblood of the theatre. From the Spanish Golden Century to Claudel and T S Eliot playwrights have conducted fascinating balancing acts between the quizzical and the devout; they may have believed they were writing religious propaganda but they have been honest and alert enough to present all the forbidding rigours of belief.

But of course this kind of religion, and this kind of drama, are minority tastes. So they have been balanced by an easier variety, by shows which iron out ironies and turn paradoxes into platitudes. Such a one is *Godspell,* the blandest thing since *The Sound of Music.*

Godspell is, quite literally, Christianity without tears, a considerable achievement since it is avowedly based on St Matthew's Gospel, and therefore has to reckon with the Crucifixion as a major climax—indeed, since it omits the Resurrection, as *the* major climax. But it doesn't go much on narrative anyway. It begins with a bunch of intellectuals down the ages, from Socrates to Buckminster Fuller, all talking at once and being generally put in their place under the collective label *Tower of Babble.* They are quietened by the arrival of John the Baptist, and after him can Christ be far behind? Our hero turns out to be a constantly smiling young man, not overburdened with personality, and the remainder of the proceedings are largely given over to his parables, recited, mimed, sung and danced by the ten lively and engaging young people who make up the cast in, but naturally, a contemporary idiom.

The question is, what contemporary idiom? The internationalism of youth here takes a severe beating, for the English cast have obviously had to reshape the script almost completely. The evening becomes a quick second-hand tour of recent comic styles with echoes of the Goons, Stanley Unwin and, just to be contemporary, Morecambe and Wise filling in the spaces where, presumably, the jokes ought to come. It's nice to know that these kids grew up listening to the same radio programmes as I did, but our common memories can hardly have meant much to the American author-director John-Michael Tebelak. Half the time he cannot have known what his cast were talking about, and must have been largely unable to instruct them in what to keep and what to throw out.

The truth is English music-hall jollity cannot be made to stand in for the high spirits, at once wilder and more disciplined, of the American lyric theatre. I have had cause to lament this fact before —but in this instance I feel more inclined to take pride in it. There is a watchfulness, an ornery suspiciousness in the English comic sense, which is proof against shows like *Godspell.* This cast, whether or not they know it, are sending up not merely the letter of the show (which Mr Tebelak may well have allowed for) but its spirit. It is a form of cynicism which may well extend into the auditorium as well. We are still low on Jesus freaks, just as we never really belonged to the love generation. The audience the night I went were very enthusiastic, but they were middle-aged, apparently delighted to see that modern youth really wouldn't bite them after all. This Jesus is certainly not the type to drive the money-changers out of the Roundhouse. (*Godspell* by the way is an H M Tennent production.) He is in fact a drag. I once saw an adaptation of a Mystery Cycle into which had been interpolated a straight recitation (though that is a lifeless word for it) of the Sermon on the Mount. The effect was devastating, and as tough-minded as any pronouncement I have heard in a theatre. *Godspell's* Sunday school, Jesus-loves-me prettification is an equal disservice to drama and religion.

I have kept the compliments till last. They are as follows:

(1) A rock musical this ain't, despite the publicity, but Stephen Schwartz's tunes, a blend of gospel and old-time Broadway, suggest that we have here a composer of great melodic facility, who also writes respectable lyrics. His tunes vanish as soon as heard, but while they are around, they are invigorating, particularly one called 'Day by Day' rousingly sung.

(2) Julie Covington, who is developing into an actress-singer of distinctiveness, gifted both with energy and its conservation.

(3) I shall probably hate *Jesus Christ Superstar* even more.

ALDWYCH

THE BALCONY

REVIEWER MARTIN ESSLIN

Above: The gasman (T P McKenna) enacts his fantasy of becoming Bishop with the help of a penitent prostitute (Frances de la Tour) in Madame Irma's brothel cum House of Illusions

GENET'S brothel, Le Balcon, is a house of illusions where men act out their secret dreams of lust and power; and the power of lust and the lust of power. The theatre also is a house of illusions. There, too, human beings enjoy abandoning themselves to their daydreams.

The audience who enter the Aldwych for this performance are confronted by a curtain of mirrors. There they sit and the stage reflects their own image. That is a powerful and profound effect. It promises well for Terry Hands' production. And, on the whole, that promise is kept.

The Balcony which had its world première in a production by Peter Zadek at the London Arts Theatre Club in April 1957, is here presented in a new translation, the text of which is based on the first and hitherto unperformed version in fifteen scenes, printed in 1956. But some passages, notably the brothelkeeper's, Madame Irma's final speech, have been added from the later version in nine scenes. So, for some passages of the play, this is also a world première: we now get, for example, the strange enactment of Madame Irma's own dream by allegorical figures representing Tears, Blood and Sperm. The earlier version also strengthens the part played by the revolutionaries in the play.

Illusion and reality and their conflict, and the fact that all reality ultimately is illusion, that is the basic theme of Genet's fascinating piece. It may, in some ways, be flawed as a dramatic structure, but ultimately it stands and triumphs as a great poem, an archetypal statement of man's predicament.

The clients of the brothel go there not just for sex. They act out their fantasies of power as bishop, judge and general, For, in Genet's view, ultimately sex and power are expressions of the same basic drive—man's search to have an impact on his fellow human beings. All daydreams of sex are thus also daydreams of power, of having one's way with another human being. The brothel is surrounded by revolutionaries and when the 'real' bearers of the power of the state, the 'real' bishop, the 'real' judge, the 'real' general and the Queen herself are blown up, the illusory figures of the brothel are presented to the masses to prove that the ritual embodiments of power are still intact. The revolutionaries themselves, in striving for power of their own, are merely building new archetypal figures of the same ilk (remember Lenin's corpse in its mausoleum, Mao's images in the streets of Peking!). And Madame Irma's protector, the police chief, embodiment of the latest actual form of the exercise of power in our cenutry, consciously strives for the moment when one of the clients of the brothel will call for a police-chief's uniform to enact his daydreams in.

For these difficult and profound ideas Genet has found a magnificently theatrical sequence of images; and Terry Hands' production with gorgeous designs by Farrah does them full justice. Hands has taken Genet at his own word and has tried to produce the play as a giant 'clown show' with all the actors appearing in white face: this produces a curious alienation effect by making the audience continuously aware of the artificiality of the proceedings, the artificiality even of those scenes which appear to deal with the 'real' as distinct from an illusory world. The whole play thus becomes an immense ritual—a sequence of stylised movements carried out as a sacred ceremonial which serves the purpose of re-incarnating a metaphysical truth beyond the power of merely realistic enactment. For Genet the Mass is the most perfect form of theatre. *The Balcony* is something like a black mass.

This conception of double stylisation with its peculiar mixture of the grotesque and the sublime makes enormous demands on the actors: I felt that Philip Locke and Helen Mirren, as the general and his steed, were most successful in bringing off the co-existence of clownlike and sacred, satirical and orgasmic elements their roles demand; Frances de la Tour was equally perfect as the Bishop's penitent girl, whilst T P McKenna still had, for my taste, too much realism in his portrayal of the little gasman who dreams of being a prince of the church. But Alan Howard was most impressive as the representative of the 'real' power, a man, at once immensely effete, and yet with a razor-sharp intellect and a will of cold steel.

Estelle Kohler in the very difficult part of Carmen, the whore

Above: The Judge (Clement McCallin, on stilts) is another client of Genet's dream brothel and practises the role he will be called upon to play in reality at the play's conclusion. A fantasy thief (Mary Rutherford) and torturer (Hugh Keays Byrne) are provided by Madame Irma

who really enjoys playing the Immaculate Conception, also achieved the blend of the comic and the sublime and emerged as an infinitely moving character. I am less sure about Brenda Bruce's Madame Irma: she had the vulgarity and the primness (which admirably fit her for the role of the Queen which she later assumes) but lacked, I feel, something of the divine madness from which the character's wild poetry must spring.

The most debatable performance, however, seemed to me Barry Stanton's as the Chief of Police. Here clearly the director had intended to lay stress on the stupidity, greed and meanness of the man. In other words he wished to emphasise the grotesquely comic aspects of the character. Yet it is the Chief of Police, who, in realising the profound connection between power and the archetypal dream images of sexual fantasy, also displays the deepest vision, the most penetrating insight of the play; he may be a grotesque, but he must also be a man of deep understanding, a demonic, satanic, inspired madman. This latter aspect of the part remained unrealised in Barry Stanton's very funny portrayal of the character—which, in so nearly flawless a performance of the play is a pity; for it unbalances the very delicately poised artistic and intellectual structure of a work which must be considered one of the masterpieces of our time.

The general (Philip Locke) trains his horse (Helen Mirren)

The brothel clients play out their roles on a real balcony—to save the regime

The revolutionaries led by Roger (Patrick Stewart, seated right) plot to break the strength of the old power symbols

ROYAL COURT

THE CHANGING ROOM

REVIEWER MARY HOLLAND

Above: Old Harry (John Barrett, left), the disillusioned cleaner at the Rugby League club, explains to the Chairman (Paul Dawkins) why he never watches a match

'WRITING A NOVEL is like launching an unmanned ship. You may direct it in a certain direction but thereafter you have no control over it, it's out of your hands. A play is like a properly crewed ship: you can modify from moment to moment, take account of the climate of feeling at any particular performance.' Thus David Storey on different aspects of his craft; to extend his own metaphor *The Changing Room* is the best crewed ship on the London stage at the moment.

It is an occupational hazard for television playwrights that their best work gets credited to directors. Who remembers the names of the dramatists whom Ken Loach puts on the screen? There is no danger of the same thing happening to a writer of Storey's reputation, yet he himself would be the first to admit his enormous debt to Lindsay Anderson. Certainly the satisfying density of and texture of human relationships in *The Changing Room* grows out of his unerringly detailed direction and the performances he draws from his large cast.

The entire action of the play takes place in the changing room for a Rugby League match, that sport which we in the South see as played by hard men in soft caps who spend their entire off pitch lives in pub or down pit. It is a chill, institutional place, warmed only by the small coal fire which has been lit for the afternoon by the caretaker, a stony faced, hymn-singing pensioner who mutters obsessionally about the poisoned winds which blow from Russia. He heats the water for the after match bath, puts out clean club jerseys. As the players drift in the room takes on the atmosphere of a ritual. Naked bodies are slapped by the team masseur, vulnerable muscles are strapped up. The smell of wintergreen fills the theatre. The manager exhorts the players, and the Chairman of the Club, determinedly jocose, comes in to say a few words. Through all this the players, thick and thin, loud-mouthed and silent, nimble and awkward, are being transformed into a coherent strong, working unit—the team.

This is the whole first act. But what is remarkable is that even in this brief time the men on the stage have become known to us as individuals. This one is a flash, wisecracking life and soul of the party, that one neat, socially ambitious with a girlfriend several cuts above the common herd. A third, gangling and clumsy, clings to his newly acquired tool box even when, inevitably, he is the one player who gets badly injured.

The second act—the interval of the match—is the celebration of the team as a unit, fused together towards common victory, resting now only to go on to greater, superhuman efforts. It is a time for thawing ice numbed fingers, rubbing bruises, muttering comfort and congratulation. All contact is physical, words are reduced to a minimum. In the last act there is the unwinding—the high spirits of victory, the buffoonery in the bath. As the players don their clothes they put on their outside personalities, abstracting them from the team and re-establishing them as individuals who inhabit a world of wives and families, jobs and worries and ambitions outside the team. At the end it is as it was in the beginning: we see the caretaker cleaning the room, preparing it for next week's game—an event which will come as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow morning.

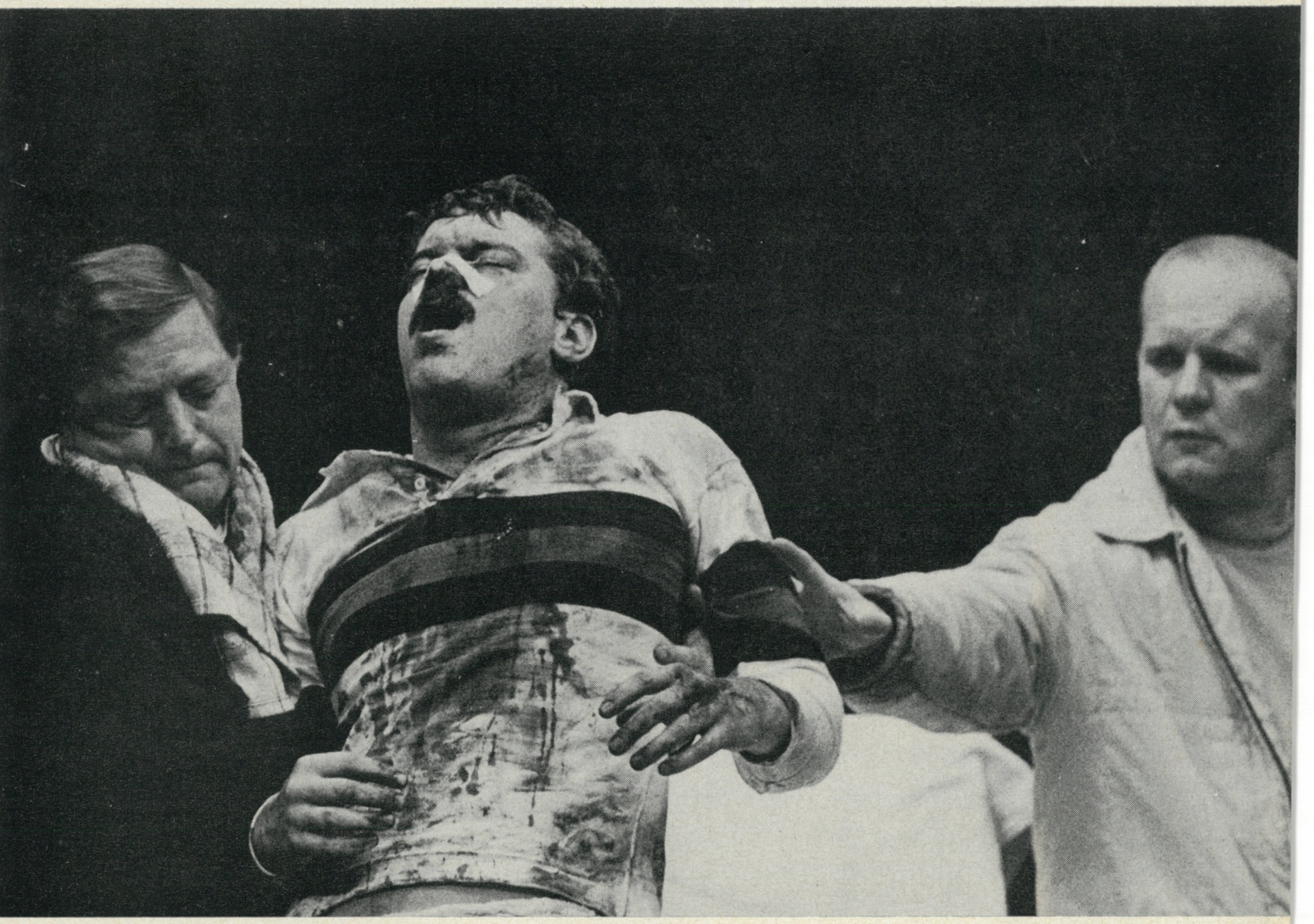
It is Mr Storey's strength as a playwright that he makes no thumping explicit statements, underlines no obvious points. For such a well wrought play, there is not even a recognisable plot to *The Changing Room*, its shape evolves from the progress of the game itself. Yet within this seemingly narrow context we see something marvellous happening on the stage—a group of ordinary men, awkward and inarticulate, welding into a group solidly committed to each other and to a common purpose. It shows the potential for solidarity, for comradeship which has been removed from most people's working lives, except perhaps in a strike which is passionately felt and pursued. The sense of satisfaction with which one leaves the theatre, of knowing the team as individuals and as a whole, is palpable. Of late the Royal Court has seemed to some of its admirers to be more concerned with producing hits for the West End stage than with any vestigial feeling for a theatre of social and political commitment. It will be a cause for celebration if this fine play, well crewed, marks the moment when the Company began to find its way back on course.

Top: The team prepare for the match and (below) the thirteen rugby enthusiasts line up for their Chairman minutes before the game begins

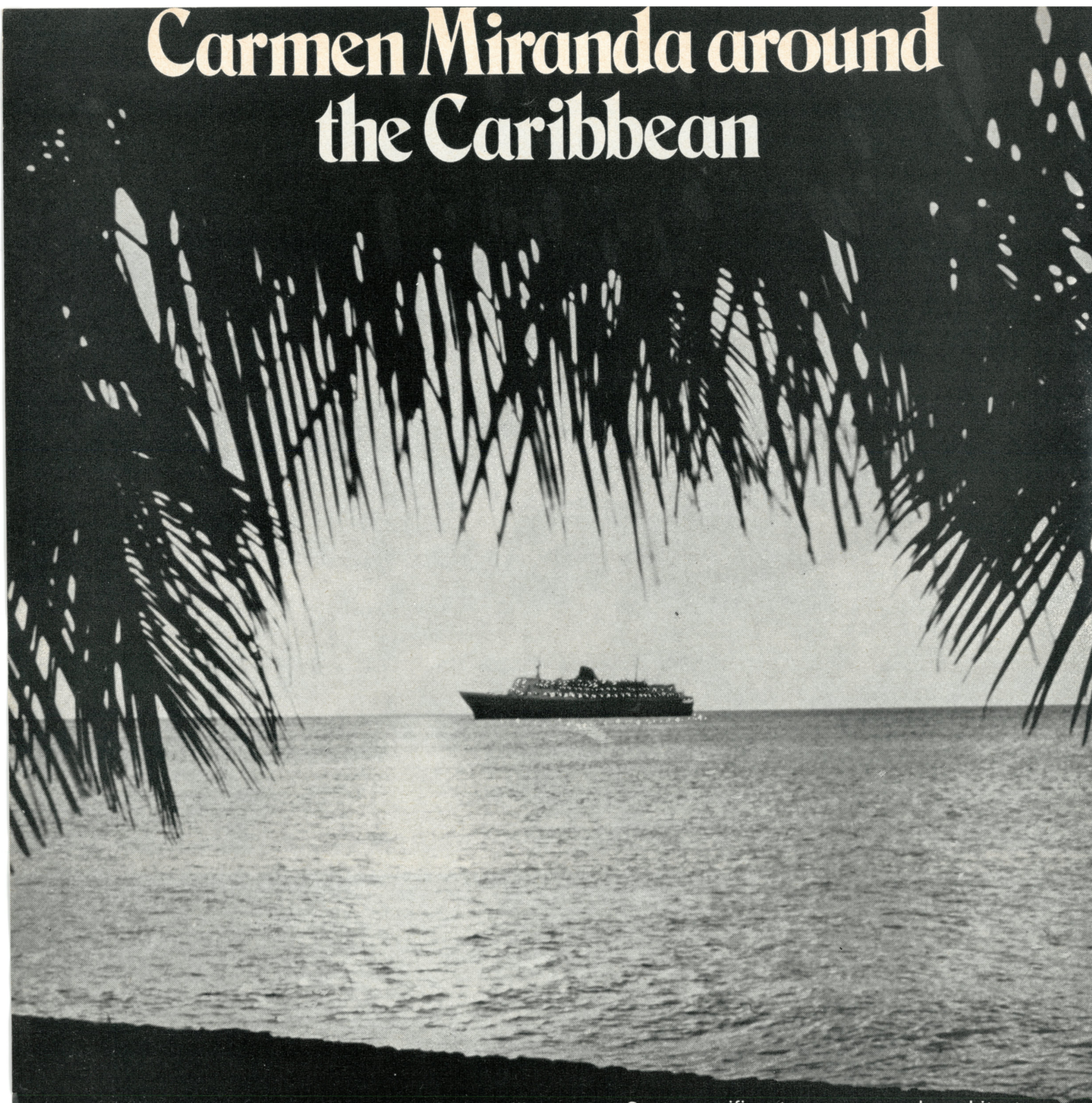
Half Time in which Moore (John Price) jokes with Atkinson (Peter Schofield, on couch)

Harry is left alone after the team's victory

Kendal (Warren Clarke, centre) is injured during the second half



Carmen Miranda around the Caribbean



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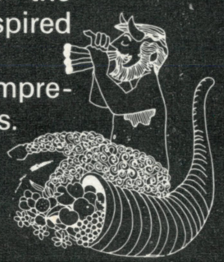

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A Liberated Woman

Greenwich

Reviewer Nigel Andrews

A LIBERATED WOMAN is a reworking of Barry Reckord's earlier play *Don't Gas The Blacks*. 'The material is either new,' says the author, 'or so drastically reshaped that the play is a new one.' Since I don't know the first play, it's a relief to be warned off making invidious comparisons, or voicing suspicions roused by the change of title that Reckord's reshaping has been in the interests of eye-catching topicality as much as his own changing vision. 'In *A Liberated Woman*,' to quote Reckord again, 'a black denies a woman the equality he demands for himself.' The theme is embodied in an eternal triangle comprising a black author (played by Reckord himself), his wife, championing sexual freedom within marriage, and a black actor committed to no cause but his own newfound success on the stage. Attracted by the actor's unfettered outlook, the wife lets herself be seduced, tells her husband she is tired of the sanctimonious constrictions of marriage, and finally walks out to live on her own.

Crude summary does less injustice to the play than it ideally should. *A Liberated Woman* tackles numerous interesting themes—that a freedom fighter in one category can be an intolerant reactionary in another, that liberty itself becomes intolerance when it destroys emotional commitment, that personal success weakens the impulse to fight for other men's causes—but ultimately fails to bring them to life in a persuasive situation or credible characters. At its best, the play has the prickly immediacy of a confrontation between people whose life-styles are radically antipathetic: when the actor declares his admiration for the wife's aesthetic taste by glibly declaring that he and she would describe a particular painting in the same words, the husband jumps up furiously with two pencils and two sheets of paper and asks him to do just that. At moments like this, the play comes idiosyncratically to life, trivial flare-ups betraying the deeper undercurrents of tension.

Elsewhere, however, Reckord is woefully over-dependent on words, and on dialogue that fluctuates between rhetorical banality ('Oh you little bitch, how can you screw our lives away!'—'Oh God, I've screwed, you're just screwed up!') and glibly exhibitionist epigrams ('You daddy me, I mother you. That's not love, it's a protection racket.': 'Oedipus Rex was a man who thought he had friends, but only had relations.'). The result is an unhappy, schizophrenic play, which works neither as Ibsenite tragedy nor as comedy of disillusionment. Reckord's own performance, sustained on a note of fastidious, plaintive sing-song, does not add conviction: and only Rudolph Walker as the conscience-free negro actor attacks his part with any visible confidence in the words he is given to speak.

Evolution of The Blues

Hampstead Theatre Club

Reviewer Robert Cushman

JON HENDRICKS, according to the liner notes on one of his albums, is an incurably happy man. I don't believe everything I read on record sleeves, but I think I might go along with that assessment, as far as his public persona is concerned. It has two guises—singer and lyricist—and in both he functions most characteristically at high speed. He who sings fast must needs sing happy, and similarly he who composes tongue-twisting lyrics to fit tunes which, as a rule, came into being as complex instrumentals.

There is no technical impossibility in singing the blues fast, nor yet in singing them happy. Some blues are cheerful, and even the bluest are tough, not lachrymose; nevertheless a performer who devotes an hour to the form (Mr Hendricks' entertainment which has seen the glory of the Monterey Jazz Festival reached us as a late-night show at the Hampstead Theatre Club) had better have some emotional depths to call upon. For the most part Mr Hendricks avoided this issue, even when dealing with a classic like 'See See Rider'; when, later on, he attempted to move us with a torch-ballad (a perfectly legitimate interpolation, though not one of the best of its kind) called 'Please Send Me Somebody to Love' he could sound no more than earnestly plaintive. Of the earth he may be, like all true talent; but he is not earthy.

There is really no reason why he should be; we are not exactly overcrowded by singers with his humour, literacy, and sophistication. He is an excellent cabaret performer, on easy terms with his audience. On this occasion he walked on, smiling, controlled robed to the ground and looking rather like Othello just before Iago put the boot in, and proceeded to tell us, as De Sylva, Brown and Henderson never dreamed, how the blues *really* began. (Well, you see there was this breeze and this whipoorwill . . .) And yet bewilderingly he failed, however conversational, to make contact. It took me a couple of minutes to figure out why but a persistent clangour of syllables gave me the clue. He was speaking *in rhyming*

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couplets which are never conducive to informality. Furthermore, these were not such couplets as one would be apt to call Augustan, or even clever. The stock complaint against Hendricks' lyrics used to be that they were self-consciously hip; well, never no more. Having once begun to strew thorns in his own path he went the limit by sharing the act with his children, who are pretty but without a tithe of their father's personality, and with his wife who duetted with him to prove that there was, and ever will be, only one Annie Ross.

This is where I turn about and say that it was, nevertheless, a lovely way to end an evening. Hendricks is still among the most agile of vocal gymnasts and his treatment of 'Everyday I Have the Blues', sunny enough to give the lie to what could be distinguished of the lyric, was infectious beyond all prophylaxis. The accompanying trio swung here, as throughout, like mad. And Hendricks' brief history of the blues though not, to put it mildly, exhaustive, gave rewarding prominence to gospel, the highspot here being not a song at all but a mock sermon. This, and a voice-percussion vignette of New York, confirmed him an engaging comedian. Much of his best material remained untouched and indeed could hardly have fitted into the blues format. Could we not have a return visit dedicated simply to the evolution of Jon Hendricks?

Friday

Royal Court Upstairs

Reviewer Nigel Andrews

IN THE PROGRAMME, acknowledgment is made to no less than 23 'Companies and individuals' for supplying the play's props, and the first sight of a stage crammed with the time-honoured paraphernalia of our consumer society—gin, instant coffee, pram, fridge, telly—leads one to expect from *Friday* a piece of Logue social satire, directed at English surburbia and thinly disguised as a slice-of-life-play. In fact, though Christopher Logue's adaptation has transferred Hugo Claus' play from its original Belgian setting to a dingy backwater of South London, and livened the dialogue with much bandying of English brand names and parochial talking points (Eric, the lover, is a Chelsea football supporter), the props and local references succeed in giving the play an idiosyncratic solidity rather than providing material for easy jokes about the suburban way of life.

What emerges is a fascinating tension between the play's high-voltage emotional situation—George returns home from serving prison sentence for sleeping with teenage daughter to find wife Jean having affair with best friend Eric—and the dampening, comical sense of daily life recontinuing for George on his return to domesticity. George and Jean's first violent quarrel is over whether he will let her watch *Madame Bovary* on television (mention of Flaubert's doom-laden triangle reflecting ironically on the childish threats and chatty compromises of Claus' husband and lover). Similarly, Eric caps his account of Jean's first adulterous surrender on the sofa by saying he remembers going home after to 'watch Colchester beat Leeds in colour.' Though the knives flash at crises, and each man is daunted by the other's unknown reserves of anger, tempers and high principles are always cut down to size by the mundane obligations of the present—food (sardines and ketchup for supper), parenthood (squalling baby upstairs) and the evening's entertainment ('What do we do now? Listen to the M4?' sighs Jean after George has kicked the telly in in a fit of pique).

Tolerant, perceptive and funny, *Friday* owes much of its effectiveness on stage to Roger Croucher's production, which holds a hair-trigger balance between the elements of comedy and violence. Fundamentally, it is a play of emotional paradoxes: George's fiercest outbursts are reserved not for his wife's infidelity but for the neglect of his vegetable garden ('You watered the wife but not the garden, 'e says' Jean blandly tells Eric), and his perverse response to Eric's decision to leave the country is to pack him and Jean off to bed for one last fling. Croucher times the play subtly enough to leave one constantly unsure what will spark the next outburst, or whether we should trust George's sudden acquiescence; and he also gets excellent performances from his cast. Diana Coupland and Tony Selby as the lovers are alternately chirpy and defensive, while John Thaw's George reacts to his cuckoldry with a splendid mixture of head-scratching bemusement and sudden, paroxysmal wrath.

Mother Adam

Arts

Reviewer Barry Norman

ON THE THIRD NIGHT of their limited run, Roy Dotrice and Beatrix Lehmann played to an audience so small and overwhelmed by loneliness that it laughed in whispers. Simply to be part of such a miniscule crowd—and there were barely enough of us present to outnumber the cast of two—was an embarrassment. Somebody, I think, should have stepped forward and formally delivered apologies for absence to explain the empty seats.

For the players, of course, such an experience must have been deeply depressing and it says a great deal for their skill and professionalism that they performed so well. But watching a stage production in circumstances of that kind makes the critic's job harder, too.

The audience, after all, is part of the

play and if that audience is elsewhere or only nominally present then a rather vital part of the whole is missing. I wonder now whether I might have enjoyed Mr Dyer's work more if I had seen it in a crowded theatre.

I admired it quite a lot, to be sure, but I cannot honestly say that I enjoyed it very much. It did not, for instance, give me nearly as much pleasure as the author's earlier works, *Rattle of a Simple Man* and *Staircase*; to which it is a natural and logical successor.

With *Mother Adam* Mr Dyer completes his three-part study of loneliness, the protagonists in this case being an aged mother and her middle-aged son bound inextricably together by mutual dependence. She is ill and bed-ridden, slowly and literally calcifying; but on balance he is the more crippled of the two. The mother's dependence on the son is largely physical: his dependence on her is entirely emotional.

We meet them on a Sunday morning in their home which, from the look of it, appears to be in the belfry of a cathedral. I don't think it possibly can have been but Ian Knight's set certainly made it appear so. Anyway, there is a cathedral nearby and from her bed the mother watches the comings and goings there and concocts bitter fantasies about the sex life of the congregation and the sidesman.

Adam feeds her, exercises her chalky limbs and conducts a mock church service for her and all the time they pick at each other's emotional sores, talking incessantly but never, as E M Forster would have it, 'connecting'.

The son has his fantasies, too, and acts out his delusions of grandeur by walking round the town dressed as an admiral. He also talks of marriage to a desiccated spinster whom he meets at the museum where he works but from the start it is perfectly obvious that this is just another dream. Too many things tie him too firmly to his mother—from the secrets she has kept from him (the secret even of his father's identity) down to the modified baby talk in which they converse.

All of which is perfectly valid matter for drama as Mr Dyer proved in his earlier plays. But where those succeeded this one ultimately fails; largely, I think, because everything is too predictable and spelt out too clearly in words of one syllable. There are no surprises and very little is left to the imagination.

From the way the play starts we can tell at once how it is going to end. What Mr Dyer has done is to underline his points in marking ink. It was not necessary to have the mother refusing to use the word 'love' to her son; nor was it necessary for him to climb on to her bed and beg her to cuddle him. The audience, however small it may be, should do some work. Mr Dyer should have left these things to us to work out.

Even so, the play—ably directed by the author and beautifully acted by Mr Dotrice and Miss Lehmann—deserves a better fate than to be performed for a handful of people. I don't know if this is of any use, but it occurs to me that Mr Dyer might convert his trilogy into a quartet by writing another work about the loneliness of an author whose play about loneliness is watched by lonely theatregoers in a nearly deserted auditorium. He might, very understandably, have some harsh things to say.

LUNCH LINE-UP

JONATHAN HAMMOND

A DISTINGUISHED MONTH on the lunchtime circuit for a change. Three of the plays offered were very good indeed of their kind, as their authors made full use of limited technical resources and were genuinely imaginative with their themes, situations and characterisations; another one could be labelled with that ominous adjective 'promising'; and only one qualified for the 'undiluted shit' award.

First, Henry Livings' *Pongo Plays*. These are delightful short satires on Victorian morality and social relationships, loosely based on commedia dell' arte and Japanese 'kyogen' plays as well as Lancashire folk-tales, and were given their first London showing by Recreation Ground at the Lamb and Flag. I was not entirely happy with the production of the three playlets on this bill, as generally they lacked the necessary precision and co-ordination, the actors' use of clogs, particularly, being more of an irritant than the 'rhythmical punctuation' intended by the author—but it was nevertheless good to see them done, as they undoubtedly contain some of Livings' best work. There was a deliciously pompous and self-regarding Master and Neighbour from Stephen Churchett, a pert, cheeky Lorris, the servant girl, from Marilyn Finlay and an amiable Sam Pongo from Geoffrey Larder (though rather short on the low peasant cunning that gives these plays half their humour).

No reservations, however, about Walter Donehue's splendid production at the Open Space of Howard Brenton's *A Sky Blue Life*, accurately subtitled 'scenes after Maxim Gorky'. Brenton's terse, economical style (shared with Snoo Wilson and other Portable Theatre-reared writers) was peculiarly effective in illuminating Gorky's talent through carefully chosen scenes from his life and through showing him in relation to his source material for his greatest works; and Donehue's production was an object lesson in what can be done with a good cast and a minimum number of props. Stephen Moore was fine as Gorky, switching from observer to participant with practised ease, but perhaps the outstanding individual performance came from Antony Milner, who contributed a suitably sardonic and ambivalent Lenin among his many changes of character. The whole play was, incidentally, an excellent introduction to the works and talent of Gorky for the uninitiated.

Olwen Wymark's *The Technicians*, performed by the Soho Theatre, is a beautifully accomplished piece of work about an unsuccessful middle-aged marriage threatened by the wife's affair with her nephew on one side and the attacks of two spiteful homosexuals on the other. Its power is increased by the fact that it can be taken either realistically or as a piece of fantasy—and Fred Proud's excellent production admirably preserved the balance between these two levels. He was helped by an unusually strong cast (with one exception), Philip Lowrie surprising the likes of me who only knew his work as Dennis Tanner beforehand with a performance of range and depth as Starr, one of the queers. William Hootkins as the other queer looking and sounding uncannily like the late Francis L Sullivan and confirming the good impression he's made in other fringe productions recently and Ruth Goring contributing an honest, unshowy performance as Mrs Rust, the play's emotional centre.

A veil, however, had better be drawn over the Soho's other offering this month, *Plastic Birthday*, which was as boring, banal and witless as the quality of life it was presumably trying to satirise, completely wasting the talents of everyone involved.

Lunchtime theatres need to use writers who can explore their limitations imaginatively (like Brenton, Livings and Mrs Wymark) if they are ever to be anything more than just an interesting adjunct to the fringe theatre scene.

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THE REGIONS

NEWSLETTERS

CARDIFF

MICHAEL ANDERSON

MAYBE some theatre-minded sociologist will one day come up with the answer to a question which strikes me forcibly every time I drive over from Bristol to see a play in Cardiff: what is it that makes theatregoing part of the basic pattern of life in some cities but not in others? A crowd of habitual theatregoers will turn out in force, however bad the reviews, for a play in Bristol; not so in Cardiff. Funnily enough, Cardiff people seem to know what is on in their theatres, and the critical reception a play has had; it's just that they haven't seen it for themselves.

This problem becomes more acute year by year as a succession of directors at the Welsh Theatre Company fails to reverse the trend; it must be vexing Michael Geliot, who has committed himself firmly to a policy of new plays at the Casson Studio (even the Christmas play is a new one by Elaine Morgan). An 80-seat auditorium wouldn't be too hard to fill, you might think, even in a city with a bad record for playgoing, but—through some unfathomable law of the theatre—when a show does badly you only sell one seat in five (or less), however few you have.

Which is a pity, for of the two new plays he has presented so far at the Casson, one was the most interesting I have seen for some time. It must be said that Olwen Jones' *Celtic Fire* failed pretty disastrously. It shouldn't have been difficult to make an interesting play out of an historical character who, in a kind of one-man UDI, proclaimed himself Chief Druid of all Wales, named his son Jesu Christ, supported the Chartist movement, cremated his children and dressed habitually in fox furs—particularly since his sexual exploits cause him to be remembered in his native Llantrisant as 'the Ram of Llan'. But this study of Dr William Price never got inside the psychology of its subject, and the author's dialogue didn't capture his celebrated rhetoric. She wasn't helped much by Michael Geliot's direction, all slide projections, tape-recordings, raucous crowd scenes and actors taking the main part in turn like athletes in a relay race.

In Ewart Alexander, on the other hand, the company has found a subtle, literate writer with a touch of poetry in his rhetoric and a powerful sense of comedy. A schoolmaster from the Swansea Valley, he's had a number of plays on TV but *Buzz Buzz Critch Critch* is his first stage play to be performed. Subtitled *A Game of Boundaries,* it begins as a study of Welsh Nationalism in the absurdist style, but this proves a cover for a deeper exploration of the conflicting claims of the territorial imperative — man's atavistic need for boundaries to preserve his own uniqueness—against his craving for friendship and the comfort of shared beliefs.

The two main characters, a chaotic tramp of a Welsh Nationalist and a smoothly disciplined English scoutmaster, enter into an unlikely alliance to erect a fence all along the Welsh border, and in the two we have the contrast between primitive and civilised man. The humanistic belief in the brotherhood of all men is symbolised in the comradeship of the boy scout troop; the anarchic demands of individualism are expressed in Cynog's dark, Celtic lust for freedom. In depicting the complex interdependence of the two, Alexander showed himself capable of strong, credible characterisation even inside an allegorical context; but the play's main failing was a lack of sufficient incidents to back up the allegory. His heroes' journey from imprisonment, through escape and recapture to eventual confinement in a mental home, where the most profound of all the boundary games were played out, could have done with more scenes like the hilarious attempt at the beginning to brainwash a troop of innocent scouts. On a chequered stage surrounded by mirrors, director Ian Watt-Smith gave a thoughtful, nicely balanced production, enabling Welsh actor Ray Handy to come up with a memorable performance as the strange Welsh patriot bristling with contradictory emotions, bold and timid by turns, burning with suspicion of his fellow men and yet pathetically eager for the few crumbs of friendship offered by his English ally. There are said to be more Welshmen in London than in Cardiff; perhaps one of the experimental companies in the metropolis will get hold of *Buzz Buzz* and find it the audience it deserves.

The WTC moved into the New Theatre for a week in November to present *Pig in a Poke,* a Feydeau farce newly translated by Michael and Diana Geliot. It's hardly one of the Frenchman's masterpieces, but it has its moments. In a plot far-fetched even by the standards of French farce, an innocent young lawyer from Bordeaux finds himself in Paris, mistaken for a famous operatic tenor, and the confusion, needless to say, leads to a series of midnight *rendez-vous.* Farce is the original theatre of cruelty—Feydeau expected his audiences to laugh without compunction at speech impediments, sexual impotence, and personal humiliation. This play, for instance, has two husbands duped into dancing around the stage waving handkerchiefs and chanting 'Come into the garden Maud' in front of their wives' lover. Plays like this need a brilliant cast and a sophisticated audience if their conspiracy to abandon the restraints of everyday morality is to succeed, and the first-night audience in Cardiff seemed a little bewildered by it all—partly, I think, because they weren't at home in Feydeau's brittle world but also because out of an impressive castlist that included John Junkin and Sheila Reid, and despite the careful timing of Geliot's stylish production, only Murray Melvin as the young lawyer and Larry Noble (after 13 years with Brian Rix) in a fairly minor part had worked their way inside the true farce style. I liked the translation, which evoked the milieu of France in the nineties without becoming stilted, and it's a pity that the production only got as far as Swansea instead of going on the major tour that had been planned.

It doesn't need mathematical genius to see that Cardiff's scanty audiences are being subsidised more heavily, per head, than almost any in the kingdom. But at the same time it would be absurd if an author like Ewart Alexander (and there must be others) could not develop as a dramatist without moving outside his native Wales or confining his talents to TV. Perhaps the magic formula for filling Cardiff's theatres will eventually be discovered (I have a few modest suggestions—why, for instance, can't the WTC announce its future programme further in advance?); in the meantime, I hope that Michael Geliot will stick by his guns and continue, with all the support he needs, his search for new Welsh plays.

LIVERPOOL

ROBIN THORNBER

DECEMBER BROUGHT a strange, rare brace of new plays to Liverpool. Both by writers I have, as they say, long admired. Both containing fine writing and acute social observation, both rich in local colour and character. Each based on a dramatically clumsy time device. Both reacting with predictable love/hate to a generation of violent change shaking Northern working class culture to its foundations. And each at a different end of that generation gap.

Soft or a Girl, John McGrath's new rock comedy at the Everyman, takes its title from the reaction of the generation that fought the war to their long-haired offspring: 'Are you soft or a girl?' (Try saying it in scornful Scouse.) It takes its theme from the cartoons on the lithoed programmes: 'Some of us died to stop Liverpool being demolished—now look at

it! What Hitler and his Luftwaffe couldn't manage Liverpool city corporation's done for him.' They've torn the heart out of the city, and dropped it in a field off the East Lancs Road—'Let them go and be unemployed in Skelmersdale'.

Of the two firewatchers on a church tower in 1941, the dentist (Roger Sloman) has 'got on' in 1971 and married his frothy-headed daughter (Allison Steadman) to a kinky, mortgaged ex-army officer. The working class militant (Donald Gee) is still plying the ferry across to New Brighton and muttering about class war; his son, (David Goodland) delivers parcels to frustrated ladies and loses his tough Lefty girlfriend (Angela Phillips) to a college education while he's chasing the dentist's daughter, 'Fry's Turkish Delight,' his dad says, 'You don't want to marry her, you want to eat her.'

Director Alan Dossor plays it like a string of revue sketches (which it is—animated political cartoon) and never even tries to integrate the gentle tough rock numbers by Petticoat and Vine, a local group with a soaring female vocal in Val Coughlin. It played to unheard of packed houses of enthusiastic, long-haired youngsters, startling the Everyman into conducting an audience survey to find out where they all came from.

After all, it's a Liverpool tradition that the Everyman should be adventurous and therefore struggling, while the big, bourgeois Playhouse takes the respectable Arts Council cream. But at the end of January the Playhouse launches its Studio 72, 'designed to make sure that the newest and most influential plays are guaranteed a production in the North West', with Howard Brenton and David Hare. Isn't this trying to steal the market the Everyman have created? They're not worried: 'We welcome any expansion in the audience for more adventurous theatre'.

Meanwhile the Playhouse continues to sew its own market up in stitches, with the blue-rinse ladies flocking in to see Bill Naughton's new play, *Lighthearted Intercourse,* which takes its title from the theme of sexual innuendo. No, that's not fair. The piece does have its meatier levels.

It takes a young had-to-get-married couple in Bolton during the Depression (that mention of *three* million unemployed is one of the most chilling throwaway lines I've heard) and looks at the effects of 'enforced idleness' on an otherwise amiably likely lad, (William Roache from *Coronation Street*) and his devoted, unloved wife (Mary Healey). The main effect of unemployment seems to be an idyllic return to bed with an egg-dip butty; when he does get a job heaving coal, the rat race and the urge to 'get on' almost get the better of him.

Then, horror of horrors, the ghost of his future self, or some such thing, points out that money isn't everything and hubby and wifey go back to bed with the egg-dip butty, to save his soul. Antony Baird's wooden playing kills the part of 'The Visitor', (as it says in the glossy programme), stone dead—as if this device wasn't already awkward enough for director Antony Tuckey to cope with plausibly.

But the sentimental moralising is overlaid with enough nostalgic allusions to the bad old Bolton of knockers-up and slop stones to keep a local audience happy. And then there's Bill Naughton's inimitable mastery of the art of keeping it up—of beating about the unmentionable bush and banging the phallic symbols without ever dropping a four letter word. 'Shall I let some wind out?' the husband says of his bicycle tyres; 'Please yourself,' his wife replies, 'you're in your own home'.

It would be interesting to try a piece like this—which presumably had an Arts Council £500 new play grant—in a summer season at the Grand at Blackpool, instead of those awful rewrites of Hylda Baker's television shows which are just as solidly based on black puddings and blue jokes.

Blackpool brings us to Ken Dodd (yes, that Ken Dodd) who has been packing them in at the Playhouse to see his Malvolio, complete with tickling stick, in an otherwise dull *Twelfth Night*. He proved himself, in case anybody doubted it, to be far more than a stand-up comic by outplaying the rest of the company as 'the trout that must be caught with tickling', as Maria says.

It was the same Liverpudlian Ken Dodd, of course, who saved the Liverpool Royal Court from Howard and Wyndham's despair by putting his Christmas show on there last year. Now the Merseyside Arts Association has completed the salvage job by renting the theatre for a couple of months each year and subletting it, free, to visiting companies like the DALTA tours.

SCOTLAND

CORDELIA OLIVER

WHETHER OR NOT new plays are given a fair hearing in Scottish theatres is a perennial bone of contention that ought, by rights, to be bare from long picking. But there's meat on it still: Stanley Eveling is the latest playwright to attack it. He is reported to have said in a recent lecture that only the Traverse, among professional theatres in Scotland, 'does the contemporary writer any good'; is the only one, in fact, which is doing anything of more than local interest.

This last statement is, of course, simply inaccurate. What *is* a fact, though, is that Traverse productions frequently go south (are often planned to do so, indeed) with a slightly longer life-expectancy and wider press-coverage than even the best productions at the Lyceum in Edinburgh or the Citizens' and the Close in Glasgow. Yet no less frequently these theatres house productions which deserve wider audiences and longer runs than they can ever hope for. Over the past two seasons Richard Eyre has given us several productions at the Lyceum, notably of Chekhov, which were so rewarding that to let them die after only a week or so seemed criminally wasteful; and at Citizens' in recent months *The White Devil, Galileo* and the current splendidly immediate *Danton's Death* have all been performances of which the same could be said.

Still, the first part of Eveling's criticism is, to some extent, justified. But it musn't be forgotten that the Traverse Theatre built up its well-deserved reputation for adventurousness in presenting previously unperformed plays (not always the same thing as new ones) because, as the prototype of small off-beat theatres in Britain, it found itself with a virtually untouched field of post-war European drama in which to dig. Plays by Arrabal, Mrozek, Gunter Grass and other writers of exceptional calibre first saw British limelight at the old Traverse. (Today many years and several directors later, the much larger 'new' Traverse is still gamely ferreting away, bringing up new work to the light of a very different day, when 'experiment' is the norm in an abundance of 'little' theatres; when in consequence, it sometimes seems that any slight fragment stands a fair chance of being given undue consequence).

In addition there was Max Stafford-Clark who, as former Artistic Director at the Traverse created an atmosphere (he is still doing this, even more determinedly as director of the Traverse Workshop Company) in which director, actors *and* writer could achieve an unusually fruitful reciprocal relationship in the evolution of both play and performance. Stanley Eveling and Max Stafford-Clark seem to enjoy one of those rare special relationships where their work is concerned—out of which came, for instance, *Dear Janet Rosenberg, Dear Mister Kooning* and, more recently, *Our Sunday Times*. (All the same it was at the Lyceum that Eveling's ambitious, full-length *Mister* was first presented, and the Poole Lunchour Theatre has done two of his one acters in its first year.)

But of course the cry is less about new plays as such, than about specifically Scottish plays, many of which are rejected every year (occasionally one of these is given an airing in a university theatre perhaps and frankly one can often—though not always—see why they *were* turned down). Citizens' Theatre is constantly under attack on this count, and it is perfectly true that, for the past few years no new *Scottish* play has been put on there. But isn't there, perhaps, another side to the argument? One would have to be pretty short-sighted to miss the fact that something theatrically valid and exciting has been happening in this theatre; that a young, disciplined, vigorous and creatively intelligent team has been forming—making mistakes, as who does not? but with a style of its own and capable of giving refreshing performances of familiar and unfamiliar plays alike. True they need the right vehicle—a recent *Three Sisters* was too uneven in atmosphere, despite some sensitive direction and playing—but when they get it they usually give us something to remember. Why, then, has no

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EUROPE

NEWSLETTERS

AMSTERDAM

ADRIAN BRINE

HUGO CLAUS, whom *The Guardian* called the Flemish Edward Bond when his play *Friday* appeared recently at the Theatre Upstairs, has just delivered his last play for some time, *Interior,* and directed it himself with the Amsterdam Company.

Interior takes place in Belgium, which for Claus is homeland, Muse and tyranny. Undoubtedly his country's greatest writer, he was imprisoned there for blasphemy some years ago, because he produced a medieval miracle play, *Mariken van Nieumegen,* in which a whore's vision of the Holy Trinity he interpreted as three naked men; for this a man goes to prison in twentieth century Belgium. A Knight in the Order of Leopold II, Claus wrote a critical play about that blood-bolter'd king, which no theatre in his native land dared to touch. Amsterdam produced it; but, of course, much of the impact was lost—it wasn't their king.

His new play again sets the Catholics on a spit. The adoring housekeeper of a wise and scholarly priest is celebrating her birthday, and her two brothers come visiting: one brings his wife, a former barmaid, the other his son, an ambivalent young rebel whose constant jibes at Church and Faith are parried by the priest with humour and gentleness: 'You can't make me angry.'

Finally the boy goes to the priest's room at night, tells of the shock-treatment he underwent to 'cure' him of homosexuality, and then tries to tempt the priest—who becomes more than angry, he becomes frightened of himself. The boy departs, the man scourges himself fiercely. The next day he is almost broken by news that the boy has committed suicide.

Claus directed the play himself, and abjured the choreographic movement-patterns and eye-filling decors beloved of native directors, choosing instead a naif production that was either super sophistication or pure amateurism. If Claus is Edward Bond as a playwright, as a director he is Grandma Moses.

In contrast was the zazzy production by Paddy Stone of 'the new Dutch musical', *And So To Bed* (no connection with J B Fagan or Samuel Pepys), by Annie M G Schmidt.

In a bitter programme note, the producers claim that 99 per cent of Dutch theatre is import, and at last this one per cent is pure Dutch. Since Holland brings out a hundred shows a year, this percentage was easy to check. The producers had forgotten not only writers like Claus, Frenkel Frank, Eric Schneider, Chiem van Houweninge, Jan Cremer, Bredero, Vondel, Huyghens and Heyermans, but also the ten to fifteen cabaret writers/artists. So they are some 30 per cent inaccurate. They'd also turned a blind eye to the fact that they could never have brought out this one without the English director/choreographer Paddy Stone, and the English lighting director Robert Ornbo, neither of whose contributions to the show's success was negligible.

It is to be hoped that their book-keeping is more accurate than their statistics.

There is some marvellous music (Harry Bannink) and splendid dance numbers, which make you forget and forgive the often half-baked jokes and the flimsy plot —a young man's life haunted by his Good and Bad Fairy Godmothers (juicy roles for two Dutch Cicely Courtneidges). It was supposed to be 'written for the actors', only the author had not noticed that one of the old ladies could not sing or dance very well (though she's the better actress), and the role of a naïve, goggle-eyed Isn't-this-*lovely*? ingénue was written for Holland's only female bass.

The author of the third play is an actor, director, and director of a company: a combination of talents likely to make hackles rise in a land where art must be democratic. As an actor, with the mellifluous voice of a John Neville, and Latin good looks, Eric Schneider won the top prize for his Hamlet some years ago; he is a director of the Nieuw Rotterdams Toneel; and as author he has three plays running in three different countries: the Habimah Theatre in Israel is currently presenting his *Theodore—a Total Loss*; in Flemish Brussels you can see *Play-Back,* in which he's turned the Circe-Penelope-Odysseus legend inside out, and set it in modern Greek circumstances; and in Rotterdam, his latest play *Rinkelrooijen* (*Doing the Town*)—a chain-dance that nods respectfully in the direction of Schnitzler's *Reigen* (*La Ronde*).

Eric Schneider re-set the play in present-day Rotterdam: the town for once saw itself reflected on its own municipal stage —the benches outside Central Station where drop-outs kip, the Rijn Hotel, with its view from the windows upon the lights of the Municipal Theatre itself, the bridge where the suicides leap. The play had the courage to be modest and unpretentious; it made no claims to be Art with a capital A, but showed respect for the public, who returned the compliment by showing its appreciation. The actors were at their best.

Shortly afterwards, Rotterdam blew up. This is the only way to describe the crisis situation that came into being. Press and radio were suddenly full of the news that an Englishman, the mysterious Mr X, had been appointed the new director of Rotterdam. Later Mr X was named as our own Frank Dunlop. This later proved untrue.

What had happened was this. The Municipality, dissatisfied with the way the generous subsidy of 3 million guilden (*c.* £370,000) was being used, and aware of the fact that through the Dutch economic situation, subsidies are being cut, and yet anxious to have the best company possible, had called in Mr Dunlop as an experienced, but disinterested arbitrator.

The actors showed their teeth. They thought they were being 'manipulated'—a key word in modern Dutch jargon. A meeting was called, and a resolution sent to the Municipality saying that in any future planning, the entire company, plus the stage management, plus the administrative staff, *demanded* to be consulted fully. Even the prompter and the typist should have their say.

And the Actor's Union sent a telegram saying that the intervention of any 'foreigner' would obviously block, rather than stimulate, the natural development of Dutch theatre.

The fight was on: who is to call the tune—the piper or he who pays him?

Indeed, the development of Dutch theatre is being blocked. The question is, who is blocking it?

briefly

Keith Michell was voted Show Business Personality of the Year by the Grand Order of Water Rats at their annual dinner at Grosvenor House last month. The award was for his BBC television performance in *The Six Wives of Henry VIII.*

The Mousetrap, which entered its 20th year at the Ambassadors on November 22, now has a new cast led by Pamela Charles, Paul Darrow, Steve Plytas, Vanessa Forsyth, Geoffrey Kenion, Michael Sadler, Chili Bouchier and Fred Kitchen. The director is David Poulson.

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GREEN ROOM

MICHAEL BILLINGTON

THE NATIONAL DEBT

MAROWITZ AND THE ARTS COUNCIL

THE EPHEMERAL THEATRE

DAME GLADYS & BILLY RUSSELL

KNOCKING THE NATIONAL Theatre has become quite a popular journalistic pastime. And, as I write, further grist has been added to the detractors' mill by the news of a financial crisis in the Waterloo Road. The acting strength is to be reduced by at least ten; the season at the New Theatre is to be prematurely terminated in the spring; and the Arts Council has been asked to supply a second grant on top of its year's subsidy of £295,000. A sad tale; yet on the very day the papers were full of stories of a 'cash crisis' I happened to be at the Old Vic watching a packed matinee of *The Captain of Köpenick* and no theatre could have seemed less doom-laden.

My own feeling is that the National has had to take rather too much stick over the last few months. Its season at the New Theatre, for instance, has been called 'disastrous' yet three of its first four productions (Jonathan Miller's phantasmagoric *Danton's Death*, the erratically brilliant *Tyger* and Page's creditable *Rules of the Game*) were nothing to be ashamed of. The big mistake, I should have thought, was opening the second theatre with four new productions in almost as many weeks, instead of siphoning off some of the proven successes from the Old Vic to provide a little box-office ballast. Very few theatres, after all, expect to have four straight hits in a row; but the New Theatre season seems to have been built around the assumption (one of almost Wilsonian optimism) that a spectacular midsummer quartet would somehow keep the theatre filled right up to the next opening in December.

If one wants to get the National's virtues and defects into perspective, one could do worse than thumb through *The National Theatre: a Pictorial Record* (40*p*) covering their productions from 1963 to 1971. This takes one from the heady excitements of the early years (when even a production as masterly as Peter Wood's *Love For Love* seemed not the exception but the rule) through the varied disappointments of *The Way of the World*, *The Idiot*, and *Cyrano* up to the past year when the company seems to have recovered its nerve. Maybe it's a matter of discreet layout (with tiny photographs for the company's few real stinkers) but the impression one gets from the booklet is that the successes have greatly outweighed the disasters and that the batting average has been consistently high.

If one is disturbed, it is perhaps by the last two pages of the volume which list the directors and designers who have worked with the company during this eight-year period. Alarmingly, one discovers that no less than 34 separate directors and 35 designers have been responsible for the 57 plays mounted during this time. Furthermore, 23 of the 34 directors have done only one production apiece. Herein, I suspect, lies the root of the company's problem and the source of the not unfamiliar complaint that one rarely finds at the National the same sense of ensemble one gets with the RSC. But obviously it's difficult to get much feeling of a perpetually developing company if actors are constantly having to adjust to widely-differing directorial styles. And there can't be much feeling of physical continuity if each new production looks completely different from the last. I suspect the RSC over the period 1963-71 has had roughly the same proportion of successes and failures as the National. The chief difference is that it absorbs its failures more easily simply because the whole is bigger than the individual parts, the company ideal more important than any one production or performance.

However, as I said earlier, I don't want to knock the National which has had excessively rough treatment from some sections of the press. Its repertoire over the years has struck a reasonable balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between old work and new. It has been more open to experiment than many of us would ever have imagined possible. And, most important, it seems to have learned something from its past mistakes in that it now has a strong team of Associate Directors (Blakemore, Dunlop, Dexter) who seem to be doing the bulk of the work in the New Year. If only it can retain more of the actors it has itself nurtured (people of the calibre of Anthony Hopkins, Robert Lang, Jane Lapotaire) instead of seeing them go freelance once their talent has ripened, then there is no earthly reason why it should not overcome its temporary difficulties and enter its new theatre in 1973 in a suitably secure, self-confident and flourishing state.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

THE ENGLISH THEATRE would certainly be a lot duller without Charles Marowitz. He gave London, in the shape of The Open Space, one of its most intelligent experimental theatres; he always writes about the theatre with great vigour; and he is a persistent thorn in the side of the Establishment. I would even argue that he has done the state some service through his lengthy five-column attack on the Arts Council's Drama Panel published in *The Guardian*. Basically his argument was that 'the Drama Panel is composed almost entirely of representatives of theatres which receive Arts Council subsidy or individuals with interlocking connections with those theatres'. As a result it was increasingly difficult for young and struggling organisations to make any headway in their applications for grants since the Panel was chiefly concerned with the preservation of the status quo. I think Mr Marowitz would have helped his case a lot more had he got all his facts right. For instance there was a specific attack on J W Lambert, Chairman of the Drama Panel, which was shown in subsequent correspondence to be entirely without foundation. And clearly the Panel is not quite the self-perpetuating body that Mr Marowitz seems to imagine.

All the same, some of his points hit home. For instance, the obvious fact that there is no real representation of fringe or experimental theatre on the Panel; the fact that metropolitan Panel-members might be horrified if they could see the low standard of some of the productions they are asked to support in the provinces; and the fact that, for a major organisation, the surest way to increase one's grant is to fall into deficit. In a letter of reply to Marowitz, Hugh Willatt, Secretary-General of the Arts Council,

put him right on matters of fact but didn't offer a point-by-point response to what he called his 'mis-statements and distortions' (why not? I'm sure the *Guardian* would have given him the space) and so far no-one has really picked up the gauntlet he so angrily flung down. I think this is a pity. As the amount of public money devoted to the theatre increases, I think there should be more, not less, discussion about where the money goes; more opportunity for civilised criticism and for detailed retaliation. A BBC producer friend of mine tells me Marowitz suggested to him that radio should give up three hours to a discussion of the spending of public money on the arts. It's a nice idea. Perhaps it's one that Stephen Hearst, the incoming head of Radio 3, should seriously ponder.

BETTER LET IT GO

THAT SAME PRODUCER-FRIEND of mine was recently passing through Stratford-upon-Avon and stopped off to see John Barton's production of *Twelfth Night*. 'What a terrible tragedy it is,' he said to me later, 'that a production like that has to die, that there isn't some way of preserving it.' I've been thinking about this lately and find I don't really agree. The glory of the theatre is that it provides an exact image of man's own existence, that it is just as ephemeral and evanescent as life itself. Keep a production going in a repertory for too long and it becomes a museum-piece, preserve it on film and it is but a shadow of its former self. As a film-critic I periodically have to sit through movie-versions of stage productions and they almost invariably strike me as being duller than the dullest ditchwater. My movie-going colleagues (who, with one or two honourable exceptions, never set foot inside a theatre) usually treat such offerings with an awesome respect: myself, I sit there thinking I'd rather have five minutes of Doris Day than a whole eternity of filmed stage classics. As T E Kalem, *Time*'s astute drama critic wrote recently: 'Year after year the singular Anglo-American idiocy of trying to adapt a given work from one form to another goes on, a process that Louis Kronenberger once described as cutting up a sofa to make a chair.'

There is only one way to record a production for posterity, I would argue, and that is on record. Irving Wardle remarked recently that *Home* is a play he would love to be able to put on the turntable; and each of us could probably draw up a list of his candidates for aural preservation. But what I dread is the day when half the repertory of the National and the RSC is recorded on these monstrous cassettes and people will be able to make odious comparisons between the performances of their own day and those of the recent past. If future generations want to find out how Olivier played Othello then the best place to go will be to Kenneth Tynan's and Ronald Bryden's marvellously evocative descriptions of the performance and not to the film record of it. Even Barton's superb *Twelfth Night* will live far better in the memory than ever it would on celluloid.

IN MEMORIAM

AND TALKING OF living in the memory, this is perhaps a fitting place to pay tribute to two fine performers, from totally different traditions, who have lately died. Firstly Dame Gladys Cooper, who even in her final performances, radiated enormous precision, energy and attack. I shall long remember her in *The Chalk Garden* delivering the Bagnold epigrams, handkerchief held nonchalantly in the palm of her left hand, as if they were by Wilde himself; or reacting to the news of her butler's death, the voice quivering for a second, the head slowly turning in incomprehension, with a genuinely moving sobriety. Even in lesser plays, she still communicated a zealous love-of-life and a total independence of outlook. And it seems characteristic that one of her last public acts was to write to *Time* magazine vigorously protesting about *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and everything it represented. Until I read W A Darlington's fine obituary in *The Daily Telegraph*, I didn't know that she had once played in three different theatres on the same evening: that seems a theatrical record that will long go unchallenged.

I was also saddened to read of the death of Billy Russell. I never saw him on the halls but I shall always remember him as the old grandfather in *The Contractor* wandering round the stage seemingly oblivious to the bustle all around him and intent chiefly on demonstrating how to tie up a piece of tent-rope. I liked also the point he made in a final interview in response to the observation that music hall and variety will never come back. 'You can't kill anything,' he said, 'that has existed for over 3,000 years.'

NEW FOR OLD

1971 WILL OBVIOUSLY go down in theatrical history as the year of the building boom: new theatres opened in Sheffield, Birmingham, Lancaster, London even. It's sad, therefore, to hear that Sadler's Wells is threatened with closure in 1972 unless it can find the £50,000 a year it needs to survive. Since the only time I've seen it packed over the past year was for Cliff Richard in *The Potting Shed*, perhaps it has a greater future as a home of drama than of lyric or dance theatre. The only thing is—who would one offer it to? Joan Littlewood? Prospect Productions? The repertory movement as a London headquarters? *Pace* Charles Marowitz, this is a problem only the Arts Council can solve.

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TV DRAMA

JOHN BOWEN

THE GUARDIANS: A POST-MORTEM

CONTRIBUTIONS on this page are usually (and rightly) general statements. However, at present most of my own general feelings about writing for television are concentrated on a particular experience. A good half of my writing year in 1971 was taken up by a serial for London Week-End, *The Guardians*. This long look back on it is an attempt to discover whether it was worth doing.

Let me begin by making it clear that, however beadily I may seem to regard aspects of London Week-End's planning, I can think of no other television company which would have allowed the same freedom to its writers. Certainly the BBC Series Department would not have tolerated such honesty in the expression of ideas or behaviour. My own television play, *Robin Redbreast*, which was less frank than some episodes of *The Guardians*, was originally written for a BBC series, rejected, because it equated ritual murder with the Christian festival of Easter, and at one point a contraceptive cap was to be shown on screen. Rejected by the Series Department, it was transmitted twice by 'Play For Today', but what must we think of a programme policy which allows honesty and seriousness in plays or serialised adaptations of Sartre, but not in series?

With London Week-End there was very little censorship. We clashed once over a visual sequence in which a girl burned herself to death. The company feared that it might act as an imitative example (and such suicides *have* been imitated): I believed that, in the context of the episode, it was deterrent. It was a difference of judgment, and I lost. And—but only after the Chairman of Anglia had threatened to drop the last two episodes because of the 'overt portrayal of a homosexual relationship' in Episode Eleven—I agreed to cut a joke about the pope's virginity. I had cut better jokes for time, and was not bothered, though whether the Chairman of one programme company ought to have a power of censorship over the programmes of another, is a matter for concern.

THE BEGINNING: Though I ended up by writing seven of the thirteen episodes of *The Guardians*, this was accidental: I never intended (or was intended) to write more than three, and at one time thought that I might not be writing any. It was Rex Firkin, an Executive Producer at London Week-End, who first thought of the series. He made a marriage between two other series, both successful, with both of which he had been concerned—*Manhunt* (underground resistance to a tyrannical government) and *The Power Game* (board-room manoeuvring for executive power). Instead of a board of directors, we had the Cabinet of an absolute government, efficiently run on business lines. Caswell and Kenneth Bligh became Sir Timothy and Christopher Hobson, and ruthless lusty red-blooded Wilder became ruthless lonely cold-blooded Norman, the Secretary to the Cabinet. This business government was a dictatorship, kept in power by a para-military force, remarkably like the SS, called 'The Guardians of the Realm', who had cornered Britain's nuclear armoury and forced Parliament to dissolve itself. The whole story was to be set in England in the early nineteen eighties.

Andrew Brown, who had produced *Manhunt*, was to produce the new series, and Vincent Tilsley, one of the *Manhunt* writers, was brought in to advise. Either he or Rex Firkin thought of the original title for the series, *Great England*, and it was he who produced an outline for the shape of the thirteen episodes, and notes on the characters—Sir Timothy; Christopher; Norman; Dr Benedict (a psychiatrist, who was to lead the resistance) and his wife, Eleanor; Tom (a Communist, working underground as one of the Guardians) and his wife, Clare.

At this point, I was approached. I had written two episodes for *The Power Game*, and a Somerset Maugham adaptation for Andrew Brown when he had been at the BBC, and I had some reputation as a playwright outside television. It was a time when I needed money to pay the Income Tax. I read the notes and outline, and talked with Messrs Brown and Tilsley. Apart from the money, two aspects of the projected series interested me very much. I thought, as they did, that in 1971, with everything seeming to be out of control—inflation, unemployment, strikes, the crime rate, the situation in Ulster, pollution, the population increase, the colour problem, homelessness, the use of violence in political demonstrations—we had reached a point where the majority of the people in this country would probably be content to give up democracy in exchange for some form of at least ostensibly beneficent 'law and order' government. And because of my own training as an historian, when I had done a little work on the British involvement in India in the 19th century, I was interested in the conflict between the ideas of good government, and self government. I didn't care for the para-military force or the theft of nuclear arms. I said that there was no need for them. Absolute governments have come to power before by democratic means, and then destroyed democracy, often quasi-constitutionally: in Britain itself, General Elections have been postponed indefinitely in time of war. If Messrs Brown and Tilsley would agree with me that Hobson, the Prime Minister, should be a Butskellite figure, exercising absolute power because he felt it was the only way to achieve necessary reforms, and that the series should show this 'good' government degenerating into an oppressive one, because the only way to change an absolute government is by absolute means—resistance leading to counter-resistance, and so on, with the innocent increasingly hurt—then I'd be glad to write for it. Meanwhile, I would wait for the first episode, which Vincent Tilsley was to write, and give a final answer when I'd read it.

I waited, and the text of Episode One arrived. Mr Tilsley, an intelligent and logical writer, had taken note of an argument I had made against using a para-military force, to the effect that power would lie with whomever commanded it, not with our benevolent Prime Minister. Accordingly he had written in an off-screen general, who issued orders through the Secretary to a complaisant Cabinet, of which Hobson, an ineffective, protesting, liberal rabbit, was only nominally the head. His Episode One contained many of the elements of the nastier Latin American dictatorships. Instead of a government genuinely desiring the people's good, which should deteriorate, by the nature of absolute government, into one which desired only to retain power, even to the people's harm, we had already all the noisy para-military paraphernalia of the police state:—that is, we had reached the point I wished to reach in Episode Thirteen.

My reaction was immediate. Heroically, regretfully, I put aside all thoughts of paying my tax. 'I cannot write for you,' I said, 'unless you will allow me to take the story back to where it should be. Hobson must have teeth, governing in fact as well as in name. The Guardians of the Realm must be disbanded.' 'Alright,' said Andrew Brown, 'Do it.'

So I thought again of the money, and did it, using up the whole of *my* first episode, Number Three, to put matters to rights. Oh, the conceit! the hubris! I had forgotten that for two episodes of the series, the Prime Minister would already have existed, rabbiting away, and that public and reviewers (even the actor)

would be confused when suddenly he began to bite. Nor did I sufficiently realise that what I was now doing was *starting* a thirteen-part serial at Episode Four, since the whole of Episode Three had to be devoted to undoing what had gone before. There were only nine episodes left to develop the theme.

DEVELOPMENTS: I have written of *The Guardians* as a serial, but it did not begin like that. The intention was that it should be not quite a series (in which every episode has to end by restoring the *status quo ante*), but not a serial either: each episode should be complete in itself within a broad pattern of development. In his notes, Vincent Tilsley had suggested that episodes should alternate between Downing Street and the country, with Hobson moving further towards the left as he became increasingly disgusted by the practicalities of power, while his son Christopher, a left-winger at odds with his father, should go out into the regions where the policies of government were being applied, and become as increasingly disenchanted with the ruthlessness, incompetence, capriciousness and doctrinaire blindness of the various forms of resistance, so that he moved towards absolutism as his father moved away.

Tilsley did not suggest any of this in Episode One, however: it was left to me to introduce Christopher in Episode Three. Meanwhile, the first of a number of mischances had occurred. By some misunderstanding of casting, an actor who was due to be killed at the end of Episode Two had been offered a contract for seven episodes. Already cut down from thirteen episodes to nine, the development of the story now had to find room for the resurrection and deeds of a character who had no place in it. What happened was that we never did go out into the regions, never saw the policies of the government in action, Christopher never did have his change of heart. And the story, having to comprehend now the classic serial elements of capture, escape and hunt, lost its ability to be split into separate episodes.

A smaller complication. *Great England*, as a title, did not appeal to the Welsh and Scottish television companies (far less Northern Ireland) who were being asked to accept the series on the network. In London Week-End, they debated a new title. Only after I had already written Episodes Three and Four, and disbanded the para-military force, did John Freeman himself decide that the new title should be *The Guardians*. Clearly, the Guardians too would have to be revived, and work found for them.

More serious, and most harmful perhaps to the series in the long run, was the part I myself had to play. I had intended to write Episodes Three and Four, another later, probably Nine, and perhaps (since the company had been good to me, and I liked the actors and the people I was working with) even a fourth. But the writer commissioned for Episode Five went past his deadline; he would do Number Six: would I write Number Five?

Three episodes in a row—153 minutes of screen time, longer than most films and most plays. Already I had taken the story my way, recreated Hobson, introduced two major characters, Christopher Hobson, and Eleanor Benedict. In 153 minutes, even the characters previously introduced became *my* characters. Like bi-coloured-python-rock-snakes, they talked the way my characters talk, they had the same points of reference, and (for Benedict in particular) I put a great deal of my own life into them.

More than that, I invented the resistance, a terrorist organisation on classical lines (which means that it was as little organised as possible, but self-seeding), with a membership mainly of bourgeois intellectuals: it was called Quarmby. And since the original Hobson/Christopher dichotomy was clearly no longer going to work, I invented a Hobson/Benedict relationship which was not dichotomy, but a kind of twinship in opposition. Two men, both operating in rational terms (the Prime Minister applying logic and common sense to society's problems, the psychiatrist who uses knowledge and intelligence to 'understand' his patients), both working towards intellectually defensible ends but in opposition to each other, are both destroyed by an inability to comprehend the irrational, illogical, emotional, wantonly destructive—both are Apollonian, destroyed by Dionysos, in Benedict's case partly by the Dionysos within himself: the theme is common in my own work. Two women, Clare and Eleanor, both ruled primarily by emotion, are harmed by what they cannot prevent, but would in the end (if the series had continued) have carried on the fight, on opposite sides, and in opposite terms. In the conflict of great men, small men are most hurt. In Episode Five, I introduced Wilf, a little incompetent red-haired Brummy private detective, caught up in affairs he didn't understand, walking unknowingly, out of friendship and over-conscientiousness, to his own death, strangled by Benedict—who had planned 'necessary' murders, but never until then been upset by the necessity to commit one himself. Wilf was to be the symbol for all the innocent, silly, helpless people who are commonly left out of political calculations, but get hurt when the calculations are applied, and the killing of Wilf was to be the point from which Benedict's decline began.

Now, in a serial, characters should have an inner life, and the serial itself may make this kind of inner statement, capable of critical analysis by American graduate students. But a serial, unless it is to be a form of Consequences, should be written by one man. *The Guardians* was to be written by at least four, as series are written, and in most series there are no characters, only bundles of characteristics to whom life is given by the actors, who are the continuing creators. I had landed my colleagues with characters whose inner life only I knew, and with literary obsessions to be found in my own work, not theirs.

Impossible task, except for *pasticheurs*, and my colleagues were creators in their own right. There were withdrawals and rejections, and in the end I myself wrote (in very little time) Episodes Eight and Nine, Eleven and Thirteen, as well as Three, Four and Five. We were very lucky that Jonathan Hales, who wrote Episodes Ten and Twelve, first felt an empathy with the women, and secondly so disagreed with my political analysis that he was able to make Episode Ten into a political argument between Benedict and a character of his own.

Even so, it must be admitted that *The Guardians* was not cohesive, that it was written mainly by someone who was not its original creator and much of whose invention was taken up by trying to comprehend elements for which he had no liking, that it must often have confused those who watched it regularly, and been nearly incomprehensible to those who did so occasionally. It doesn't much matter if one misses an episode of *Coronation Street* or *Crossroads*, because the pace is slow and the thought simple. I suspect that successful television is like John Terraine's programme, *The First Casualty*, on Great War propaganda, in which one point was made in the first four minutes, and repeated for the next fifty. In *The Guardians*, we not only made more than one point, but each new point depended on an understanding of the one before.

RATINGS, RESPONSE, REVIEWERS: The *Power Game/Manhunt* cross had not been intended to be a 'minority' programme or, as some reviewers said, to 'break new ground in television', but that was how it soon seemed likely to turn out, and with only one script recorded and three more written, London Week-End's Controller of Programmes very sensibly scheduled it at a time, 10.10 on Saturdays, when few people would be watching, and it would provide a real alternative to the BBC's *Up Pompeii* and (a few weeks after) *Match of the Day*. Other Controllers put it out later, the Scots at 10.42, Southern Television at 11 pm.

Andrew Brown believed that, if it had been shown in peak time, it would have attracted a large audience, but the ratings do not support him. Yorkshire and the North East began by showing it at 9.02 pm, and the masses did not watch. After one transmission, Yorkshire dropped the programme back to 10.44, and the rating dropped from 24 to 15, but the North East kept it far longer at the earlier time, and it only once had a rating above 20. The time of showing does make some difference, of course. Towards the end of the series, most of the companies began to push it about the schedules, changing not merely the time of showing, but the day also. The South West transmitted the last three episodes at 11.45 pm, and the rating dropped from 20 to 3.

One might think that sophisticated Londoners would respond to a sophisticated series, but Londoners go out on

Saturday nights: the best figures came from Lancashire. A series' real success in terms of ratings can be measured in two ways. First, did each individual episode hold the audience's attention, and finish with as many viewers as it began? The individual episodes of *The Guardians* did so. An episode which began after ten would pass the dreaded eleven pm (bedtime outside London) without any significant drop in the rating. Second, did the whole series end with a rating significantly lower than when it began—particularly does this apply to a serial, which is hardly likely to pick up an audience. In sophisticated London, Episode One had a rating of 17, and Episode Thirteen of 16; in Lancashire, the rating dropped from 26 to 21, even after the series had been shifted to Friday; the Midlands changed the day from Saturday to Monday and the time from 10.10 to 11 pm, and the rating dropped from 23 to 14. Southern (11 pm and a change of day) began with 11 and ended with 9. In general, it can be said that *The Guardians* found a 'minority' audience of about a million people, who stayed with the programme, even when they had to make an effort to find it.

The public response was positively encouraging. One would have expected the Whitehouse Brigade to be out in force, but either Mrs W has less support than she thinks, or else her followers go to bed early. Over the thirteen weeks, there were four letters and thirteen phone calls complaining about bad language, violence and references to sexual activity. There were forty-two letters and four phone calls expressing general approval and making interested enquiries (usually about the music), and two hundred people wrote to ask for a synopsis. Perhaps I might have kept in the joke about the pope.

As for the reviewers, *The Morning Star* was predictably hostile, since no Communist paper could allow that the majority of the working class would accept such a government as Hobson's. Mr Peter Black, displaying an equal ignorance of George Orwell's work and my own, used the first to dismiss the second. And *The Times* well, it's always a toss-up with *The Times*. If one is lucky, one gets Stanley Reynolds, but a mere series is liable to be left to a middle-aged, giggly gentleman named Leonard Buckley—I write of him, of course, only in his public capacity as a reviewer, which is the only way I know him. I was much angered by Mr Buckley, since my reputation up to now has not been as a trivial or pornographic writer, and my aim had been to show the corruption of good intentions into violence and the hurt of the innocent, but when later I saw Edward Bond's *Lear*, and read some of the reviews, and there certainly was a compassionate writer, sickened by the violence of public acts, and he was getting the same giggly reaction from the same sort of reviewers, who could not see the hurt for what caused it, I became more resigned.

In any case, I had been spoiled. As a playwright, even for television, I was accustomed to my plays' *being* reviewed: I had forgotten that the same treatment is not given to the episodes of a serial, however seriously written and however well acted. Only Maurice Wiggin and Philip Purser seem to have watched all of it, and the criticisms they made were just. It was an impossible task; it was flawed in the execution; it did all seem to take place in a vacuum. All TV series do take place in vacuums, of course, because the full rich web of life would be too expensive to reproduce on film and in the studio. For a story set in the present, the audience's own knowledge and experience fills much of the vacuum. But in the future, every known aspect of life becomes a question: we want to be shown it all, to see how it has changed. So the action of *The Guardians* did seem to take place in a kind of glossy bubble (which grew more and more glossy to the distress of everyone artistically concerned except for the designers), and this was all the more true because of the complication I've mentioned, which prevented the story from moving as much as it should into the provinces.

CONCLUSION: *The Guardians* was planned in a hurry: I was approached in April, the first episode was recorded in June, and transmitted in July. The development proceeded accidentally: there was none of the rigorous creative control which Wilfred Greatorex imposed on the Wilder saga. Since it became a serial, it would have been better written by one author, as the *Quatermass* serials were. All true. All the cause of faults.

Yet it did 'break new ground'. It did deal with political ideas in a way no other series has. It was better acted overall than any other series I can think of: it was really so well acted that for most of the time one didn't notice the acting. It was grown-up. It was worth doing.

If I myself had been approached at the beginning to write a thirteen-part serial, with a planning time of six months, I should almost certainly have refused, as I suspect Vincent Tilsley would: it would have taken me longer than a play, as long as a novel, and been over and forgotten within a year. Yet, because I became involved, because I felt responsible, I did write seven episodes—357 minutes, almost as long as the Shakespearean cycle from *Richard II* to *Richard III*—and I did wish at the end that I had written all of it.

I feel, as Messrs Wiggin and Purser felt, that *The Guardians* was flawed—more than that: distorted. I feel that, because it was not successful commercially (a million audience is not success), nothing like it may be done again, so we may have muddied waters which might have run more clearly from another spigot. I feel that my own involvement, more than any other single factor, may have turned the series from something potentially 'popular' to a 'minority programme', and also made it more difficult for other writers to contribute. I feel at times a great sense of waste—selfishly so: I used up in *The Guardians* ideas, feelings and experience which might have served a more lasting work, since, under pressure one relies greatly on one's own sub-concious: even Thomas, a cat of my childhood, came back from forgotten corridors of memory to haunt Benedict's dreams.

I don't, I discover, feel ashamed of it.

TV—AHEAD

December 25	Cider With Rosie	Adaptation of the Laurie Lee novel. With Rosemary Leach	**BBC2**
December 27	A Wen	Saul Bellow play with Sam Wanamaker and Miriam Karlin	**BBC2 10.30**
December 28	The Snow Goose	Paul Gallico's story, starring Richard Harris and Jenny Agutter	**BBC2**
January 6	Shadow of the Tower	New costume series concerning the reign of Henry VII. With James Maxwell	**BBC2 8.30**
January 13	Still Waters	A Julia Jones Play for Today	**BBC1 9.20**

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RADIO DRAMA

MALCOLM BRADBURY

WHEN, THIS SUMMER, a radio play of mine called *A Very Hospitable Person* was broadcast from Birmingham, it represented a further stage in a flirtation which has been going on between myself and radio drama for quite a long time. I happen to be one of those writers who thinks of radio as a very possible form, an attitude which, I admit, may well simply date me. The fact remains that I have a strong sense of radio as a desirable and challenging mode of expression, a medium which opens up complex artistic opportunities—and I find it infinitely more interesting at the moment than television.

This is the reverse of the conventional wisdom; the fact is that it is television that has excited many of the writers of my generation, has pushed them creatively into drama, and led them to their main line of work. It has also, though, produced a lot of spectacular personal disappointments, and a sense among some of them that the challenge which they thought they were facing wasn't notably creative at all. The technological and communicatory thrill—by the latter I mean the thrill of sensing access to vast audiences, and hence almost a political power, in one's hands—once satisfied and over, the sheer technological bulk of the medium and the vast scale of its output and waste becomes very apparent. In this respect radio—less exposed, less costly, less technological, less, if one might say so, public—becomes one of those settled down, well-explored forms where technique and content can blend challengingly but without spectacular bravura.

Born, as I was, in a pre-television era in which I spent my youth with one ear glued to the radio, assimilating a rich cultural diet of comedy, music-hall and drama, I found that my very first literary enterprises led me into the direction of writing for radio. To be precise, I had ambitions to rival two powerful culture-heroes of the time, Frank Muir and Denis Norden, and so I appropriately began submitting comedy scripts to the BBC's Variety Script Section, where they were received with great kindness of spirit. I then went on to university and found higher intellectual aims calling me, the ambition to perform in grander literary genres, like the novel. Still, the radio play remained very much within my armoury of forms; and thinking back on the reasons for this I suppose one is that I never conceived of radio as a totally mass species. It is as if television came in just in time to let steam radio endure with that delicate air of cultural stratification which Reith created for it. Something of this structure of cultural presumption still remains in radio, and what it does is to bring alive the sense of conspiring with a particular, selected audience to create a serious act of expression.

So I have, from time to time, come back to radio drama, and with a decided sense of opportunity and possibility. The most recent occasion I did this was over the last year, when a sequence of chances, including a meeting with Martin Esslin, and a discovery that someone with whom I had once collaborated in writing revue was now producing for radio, brought about the script of *A Very Hospitable Person*. This time, the material I was working with was already in some sort of shape, and the particular challenge was making the transformation to radio, a challenge that I think was considerable.

What I had was a short story I'd written, an ironic story about an American middle-western hostess whose sense of hospitality was so thorough-going that, having offered her dinner-guests a first-rate meal, she went on to offer them her own self as well. At first sight, the story was readily adaptable to radio, since it was told almost entirely in dialogue. It was only when I began working over the script that I started to see what looked like the limitations of radio: its stress on the spoken word seemed to eliminate two kinds of sub-text essential to the story. One was what might be called a 'literary' sub-text; the entire point of the story was the apparent indifference of the narrator to what he was telling, so that the reader had to search it to pick up the tone, the moral perspectives, and indeed the sense of what really happened. The second was what might be called the 'acting' sub-text; it was a story in which undescribed but significant energies surged, and a group of psychological encounters and shocks were taking place between the brittleness and angularity of the dinner-table dialogue. In a visual medium, the actors could have conveyed this by action and expression; but now they, like me, had nothing but the spoken word.

In the event, the real challenge probably fell most on the producer, James Duckett, who found several valuable ways of breaking beneath the surface. One of these was improvisation; he decided to generate as much naturalistic surface as possible by actually having the dinner-party, and the house in question, laid in the studio. The play took its pace and movement from this; and it enabled the sense of the dialogue as an instrument of social game to come over very clearly. More difficult, I think, was the conveying of the perspective on the story. Whether the flat outrageousness of the central character, the terrible hostess, came over as clearly as I could have wished I still wonder about; but what did occur in the studio among the four actors was a remarkable generation of energy, of psychic force and strain. The problem of conveying this is a problem that has run deeply in the whole endeavour of modern artistic exploration; the various media, from the novel to the film, have striven to come up with answers. What, I think, this production made clear to me was that radio could find them too.

RADIO—AHEAD

December 24	A Putney Christmas	Frederick Bradnum's evocation of Swinburne and Watts-Dunton's Christmas in 1905.	**Radio 3 8.45**
December 25	Cry Wolf	Saki's story adapted by Val Gielgud	**Radio 4 8.30**
December 27	Trelawny of the Wells	A repeat of Pinero's famous play	**Radio 4 8.30**
January 2	Don Juan	The new specially-commissioned translation by Christopher Hampton of Molière's play	**Radio 3 7.45**
January 9	Bajazet	New translation of Racine's play by John Edmunds	**Radio 3 7.05**
January 10	Hedda Gabler	Repeat, for the Peggy Ashcroft season, of Donald McWhinnie's production	**Radio 4 8.30**
January 15	Laburnum Grove	A northern production of J B Priestley's comedy	**Radio 4 8.30**

GETTING ON

Complete text

by ALAN BENNETT

Characters

GEORGE OLIVER MP
GEOFF PRICE
POLLY OLIVER
BRIAN LOWTHER MP
ANDY OLIVER
MRS BRODRIBB
VOICES OFF: *Two children, a boy of eight, a girl of four*

The play is set in London. The time is the present.

The play is set in the basement or the ground floor of an Edwardian house, of which the kitchen and living room run into one another. The kitchen is at the rear of the stage. The outside door is upstage and there is another door downstage which goes upstairs. Also downstage left is a large Victorian overmantel mirror, which George frequently addresses. There is much white paint, and the house has an airy good feeling to it . . . not cluttered Victoriana. Nevertheless there are a lot of objects around, furniture, glasses, pictures. A collage of children's drawings on the wall, photographs, Mr Heath, Private Eye *covers. A red election rosette, haphazard, not artistic. A string of onions, a pan stand, some stripped pine. But not new looking. Fairly worn. It shouldn't look particularly smart or trendy.*
There is a child crying upstairs.

GEORGE OLIVER MP *enters. He is a man of about forty, rather glamorous once, now a bit florid, worn, running to fat. He wears quite good clothes, but they don't hang well on him. He smokes cheroots. His voice, originally northern, is now a pretty non-descript educated voice, but his accent thickens when angry or passionate. He is a deeply misanthropic man, hence his jokes.*

GEORGE: If I were to be taken and pinioned for hours at a time in a shuddering, jerking box of steel and glass, lights flashed in my eyes, fumes blown up my nose and gas pumped into my lungs, if this were to be done by the Chinese, then I should be the subject of stern leaders in *The Times* and the righteous anger of the *Daily Express*. Yet I submit to this treatment of my own free will. I do it every week and it's called driving down to London. Hello.

(*During this speech* GEOFF *has entered from the stairs door, and hangs about behind him.* GEOFF *is nineteen, handsome in a Pre-Raphaelite way and very thin.*)

I thought you were Polly.

GEOFF: (*who looks at himself as if not entirely certain he isn't*) N-o-o.

GEORGE: Who are you? No. Don't tell me. You could be one of several people. You aren't the man from the central heating, or the man who comes to mend the washing machine. Both almost daily visitors. Perhaps you are another unemployed actor. Several leading lights in the National Theatre have not been ashamed to plunge their feather dusters through our accumulated possessions. Indeed that is one of the reasons I don't go to the theatre: it's hard to believe in Pastor Manders when you knew him first as a somewhat below average window cleaner. And if not an actor, what?

GEOFF: The marble, I . . .

GEORGE: A supply teacher perhaps. My son has bitten Miss Gainsborough's leg again? Or from the Portobello Road with a new addition to our already definitive collection of stripped pine.

GEOFF: I brought the marble.

GEORGE: Marble?

GEOFF: They were clearing out this old bakery in Kentish Town and Polly . . . your wife . . . thought the slabs would come in useful, somewhere.

GEORGE: Somewhere. Look around this room . . . I'm sorry, I don't know your name.

GEOFF: Geoff.

GEORGE: Look around this room, Geoff. Can you see anywhere where marble might come in useful? Do you see any surface not adequately covered, anywhere in fact where marble might come in handy?

GEOFF: Not off-hand, no.

GEORGE: No. And the only reason I can think of why my wife should be picking up the odd marble slab is that with her customary foresight and economy she thinks it will come in handy for a good gravestone for me.

GEOFF: I don't think so.

GEORGE: Is she upstairs?

GEOFF: She's just putting the children to sleep.

GEORGE: Humanely, I hope. Oh, shut up. I've caught this mood of relentless facetiousness from the car radio. Have you noticed that the BBC keeps its silliest programmes and its jokiest announcers for those times in the morning and evening when people are on their way to and from *work*. It's very significant. Why should the BBC choose those times to cover the land in a pall of fatuity? What is it about work that we have to be hurried to and from it by drivelling idiots? I tell you what I think, I think it's an indication of profound malaise in the social structure.

GEOFF: I'd never thought of that.

GEORGE: Is that tea you're making?

GEOFF: Yes.

GEORGE: That's not the teapot. There's the teapot.

GEOFF: Yes. Sorry.

GEORGE: That is an appliance for forcing beef tea down the noses of unsuspecting invalids. It hasn't quite found its place yet.

GEOFF: It's nice. You've got lots of nice things.

GEORGE: We have so many things that by the law of averages some of them must be nice.

(POLLY *enters by the stairs door left. She is thirtyish, attractive, perceptibly younger than* GEORGE. *Harassed. Scatter-brained, or*

GETTING ON received its first London performance at the Queen's on October 14, 1971, presented by Stoll Productions Ltd. Directed by Patrick Garland, designed by Julia Trevelyan Oman with lighting by Joe Davis, it had the following cast:

GEORGE OLIVER, MP ..... Kenneth More
POLLY OLIVER ..... Gemma Jones
BRIAN LOWTHER, MP ..... Brian Cox
ENID BAKER ..... Mona Washbourne
GEOFF PRICE ..... Sebastian Graham-Jones
ANDY OLIVER ..... Keith Skinner
MRS BRODRIBB ..... Edna Dare

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Faber & Faber will publish *Getting On* in volume form early in 1972.

deliberately giving that impression, but not stupid. She is carrying a pile of children's clothes, or one or two of the children's paintings. She should always be doing something about the house finding odd jobs to do. She never wastes a minute.)

POLLY: It *is* you. James it was you and I said it was time he went to sleep.

CHILD'S VOICE: Dad. Dad. Dad.

(*She shouts up the stairs.*)

POLLY: No, it isn't George. It's the television.

CHILD'S VOICE: Will you come up and see me.

POLLY: No, I can't Not now. Read your reading book. This is George, my husband. This is Geoff . . . I never asked your other name.

GEOFF: Price.

POLLY: Price. By rights it's an old-fashioned inhaler. I can't think what to do with it.

GEOFF: Flowers?

POLLY: Flowers, I suppose, but I always think that's a bit of a defeat. James has been using it as a rocket launcher. I suppose it will come in somewhere. Sit down, Geoff.

GEOFF: Can't I help?

POLLY: I'll see to it. How were the dark satanic mills?

GEORGE: Rather nice today. I saw Nelly and Sam who send their regards. The Town Hall do was bloody. I said my piece for Granada. And I saw a falcon on the Motorway. (*to* GEOFF) Sit down, sit down, for goodness sake.

POLLY: Are you wanting anything to eat? We had ours with the children.

GEORGE: No. I ate on the Motorway. At the Grid n'Griddle. I had Ham n'Eggs. And now I've got 'ndigestion.
Oh, and I ran into McMasters.

POLLY: In Manchester? Which cup would you like?

GEOFF: I'm easy. Any.

POLLY: Would you like A View of Lowestoft, a Masonic mug from Salford, or The Revd E S Clough, Twenty Five Years at Scotney Rd Chapel, Pudsey?

GEOFF: Yes, that one.

GEORGE: There's not much to choose except that one's chipped, one's cracked and the other you can't get your finger through the handle.

POLLY: Scones. They're home made.

GEOFF: If I lived here I should get fat.

GEORGE: He said I could go back to Oxford any time I wanted.

POLLY: That's nice to know, anyway. Lovely and thin, George used to be, just like you.

GEORGE: I don't think I was ever quite as thin as that.

POLLY: I wouldn't care about you getting fatter if you were getting jollier. People are thinner now, aren't they? Young people. Younger people. I mean. It's the right foods.

GEORGE: We never had any oranges during the war. You won't remember the war, of course.

GEOFF: No.

GEORGE: People don't seem to, nowadays. I don't suppose you were even born when it ended.

GEOFF: No. Not by a long way.

POLLY: It's funny. One meets more and more people who weren't. There didn't used to be any, and now one meets them all the time.

GEORGE: I remember the end of the war. In fact I remember the actual war.

GEOFF: That must be great.

GEORGE: Yes, it is.

(*Pause.*)

GEOFF: Did you fight at all?

GEORGE: No. I wasn't old enough.

GEOFF: It must be awful to have, you know, your earliest memories . . . you know, sort of seared by it.

GEORGE: Yes. I was evacuated to Harrogate . . . and that was a bit . . . searing. Were you . . . seared at all, Polly?

(POLLY *pointedly ignores him.*)

More tea Geoff?

GEOFF: It's the German side of it that interests me.

GEORGE: We weren't so much interested in the Germans as bitterly opposed to them.

GEOFF: I collect one or two things . . . badges, things like that.

POLLY: Really. I'll keep my eyes open. I often see odd bits of things when I'm on my travels. I'm not sure we don't have a bit of shrapnel upstairs. A buzz bomb fell near us at Stanmore. Would you be interested in that?

(*A horn sounds outside.*)

GEOFF: That would be marvellous.

POLLY: It's just a jagged bit of metal really, but it would be nice if someone had it who really appreciated it . . . for what it is. I've never been able to find a use for it.

(*A horn sounds again, more angrily.*)

GEORGE: All right, all right. I'm double parked. You can't even park outside you own house.

(*He goes out by the street door.*)

POLLY: George in an MP.

GEOFF: What sort?

POLLY: Guess.

GEOFF: Cons . . .

POLLY: No.

GEOFF: Sorry.

POLLY: I'm not offended.

GEOFF: It's just that . . . he has . . . a look about him . . .

POLLY: That's not party, that's politics. He's been up in his constituency holding a surgery. Where people come and tell him their troubles.

GEOFF: What sort of thing? Troubles?

GEORGE: He'd got miles of room.

POLLY: All sorts.

GEORGE: The council's demolishing their houses, the Ministry withholding their pensions, benefits, compensation ejection. The load of bitterness and despair people hump about with them you'd be amazed.

POLLY: It's a very poor constituency. He was lucky to get it . . . I mean . . .

GEORGE: Not really. Poor. At least not many. It's the ones who've gone to the wall. I had a woman in today who believes that her husband, an unemployed fitter, is having an affair with the Queen. And that the Household Cavalry had her under constant watch.

POLLY: Why the Household Cavalry?

GEORGE: Why the Queen?

POLLY: Poor soul. What did you say?

GEORGE: We agreed that the best thing for me to do was to ask the Duke of Edinburgh to have a quiet word with Her Majesty and when she'd gone I had a quiet word with the Mental Health Officer. Poor bugger. Then there was an enormous West Indian woman who said the people next door kept poisoning her cat and the police wouldn't listen to her. I didn't do anything about her at all.

POLLY: There ought to be some way of stopping them wasting your time.

GEORGE: That's why they land up with me, because nobody else has been prepared to waste their time. They just get passed on. They can't get into the army, they can't get out of the army, the wife's gone off with the kids, the kids have gone into a home, a policeman's hit them over the head. Then some people come just because it's free and they want to talk to somebody and they know it's their right. I'm quite sure there are seventy-year old ladies who line up at the ante-natal clinic because they'd feel cheated if they didn't.

(GEOFF *is a good listener and laughs at all* GEORGE*'s more obvious jokes.*)

The words Member of Parliament still have prestige though, extraordinary. One phone call and officials are scuttling about all over the place.

GEOFF: That's great.

GEORGE: There are still people who stink, did you know that? They sit there on the other side of the table in Sam's airless little office and they stink of muck and squalor and filth and despair. They're just clinging on to the bare face of life. Sorry. Shop.

POLLY: I'm just trying to think what else there is to do. Is electricity in your line, because there's the landing light. I ought to have asked Captain Oates to do it.

GEOFF: Who?

POLLY: Captain Oates. We call him, anyway. He was an electrician who came to do the bathroom. One day he went off saying 'I'm just going out. I may be quite a time.' And he never came back. So George christened him Captain Oates.

(GEOFF *is perplexed and silent.*)

Sorry. Captain Oates was someone who went with Captain Scott.
(GEOFF *smiles, but is still uncomprehending.*)
The first man to . . .
GEORGE: The first Englishman—
POLLY: The first Englishman to get to the North . . .
GEORGE: South.
POLLY: South Pole. This Captain Oates was with him. He had a bad leg or something, and was holding them up, so one night he went out of the tent saying 'I'm just going outside. I may be some time.' When really they all knew he wasn't going to come back.
GEOFF: Oh.
He tries to force a laugh.
GEORGE: Though it's my belief he may have been going for a particularly long slash.
POLLY: Anyway that's why we called the plumber Captain Oates.
GEOFF: I thought you said it was the electrician.
POLLY: It was.
(*Pause*)
GEOFF: You must think I'm thick.
GEORGE: No. It's just a fact. You know it or you don't.
GEOFF: You both know it, though.
GEORGE: So? It's like knowing about cars or the times of trains. Facts. Nothing to do with intelligence. Of course I'm not saying you're not thick. Only that that doesn't prove it. I could well do without knowing about Captain Oates. Useless facts swilling about the brain. Could all be drained off and I should be none the wiser. Or none the stupider.
(*A crash and crying from upstairs.*)
Look out, I can hear Thompson and Bywaters. Our two children at present on licence from Strangeways. James seven . . .
POLLY: Eight.
GEORGE: And Elizabeth, three?
(POLLY *creeps to the door and listens.*)
POLLY: Go to sleep, love. No, he's not. You're not to come down.
(*Sounds of children coming downstairs.* GEORGE *goes to door and flings it open.*)
GEORGE: No, young man. Back you go. You've no business to be out of bed. Up, up, up.
(GEORGE *goes upstairs.*)
POLLY: They are demons. Have you got a flat?
GEOFF: Sort of.
POLLY: Do you live with someone. I mean not live with 'live with', I mean—
GEOFF: Yes. In Notting Hill. We have this house. It's owned by some anarchists. I suppose it's a sort of commune really . . . we're always borrowing each other's butter anyway.
(POLLY *should be active throughout this, clearing up new things, backwards and forwards between the kitchen and living room, so that sometimes she misses his comments and he hers.*)
We started off trying to set up a small anarchist community but people wouldn't obey the rules.
POLLY: I suppose you think we're very corrupt.
GEOFF: No. Are you?
POLLY: All this . . . property, possessions. Politics.
GEOFF: Not this sort of stuff. This isn't really possessions, is it.
POLLY: Isn't it?
GEOFF: No. Most people wouldn't want this sort of stuff anyway. Do I make you nervous?
POLLY: What. No. No.
(*But he does.*
GEORGE *comes down.*)
GEORGE: He wants a banana and she wants a cup of tea. How many sugars?
POLLY: It varies.
GEORGE: How many sugars.
(*Unidentifiable shout.*)
Seven! Seven.
POLLY: How did you take up . . . sort of . . . doing nothing?
GEOFF: I wasn't much good at school. I got rheumatic fever when I was ten, and I got behind hand. I went to a special school for a bit.
(GEORGE *is now going upstairs again with the tea.*)
Then I kept being off school and never really got the hang of it again.
(POLLY *is in the kitchen.*)
There was a group of us. We just used to sit at the back of the class and wank.
POLLY: Was it a comprehensive school then?
GEOFF: And I reckoned I could do that just as well at home. I went round Art School for a bit, but I didn't reckon that much either.
Are you Sagittarius?
POLLY: Me? Why? I always forget. December 14. I generally have to look it up.
GEOFF: (*nodding*) Sagittarius.
POLLY: How do you know?
GEOFF: Vibes, I suppose.
POLLY: It's dogs and sport, isn't it, Sagittarius. Not really me.
GEOFF: I sussed this Libra bird on the Tube last week and she'd never opened her mouth.
POLLY: What's George then, if you're so good at guessing?
GEOFF: Leo.
POLLY: What are you. July 30. Yes, he is. You are Leo aren't you? Fancy Geoff knowing that.
GEORGE: It's rubbish.
GEOFF: It isn't, you know.
(*They are about to start and argue, but* GEOFF *thinks better of it.*)
Where is this plug?
POLLY: In the cistern cupboard. Mind you don't get a shock.
(*He opens the stairs door,* GEORGE *hears the kids coming and pushes him aside.*)
GEORGE: All right, it's very nice of you to bring the cup down, thank you. But James, if I catch you out of bed once more there'll be no Jugoslavia. Right? 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.' You might know Jesus wasn't married.
(GEOFF *goes upstairs.*)
He says you didn't read with him.
POLLY: There wasn't time. Besides I don't understand this new system. There I am going C-A-T and they don't do it like that any more.
GEORGE: Will you hear my words?
POLLY: What for?
GEORGE: That television. Here . . . Skip the first bit, I'm going to re-write that . . . burble, burble, burble . . . ours is still a society in which we throw people into the dustbin, some sooner, some later. We chuck some people in at fifteen, we chuck others in at sixty five. Our society is one that produces a colossal amount of waste rubbish. Litter, junk, waste. Yes?
POLLY: The leftovers.
GEORGE: The leftovers. And in among the leftovers are people. We waste people. The best society—I think a socialist society—is one in which fewest people are wasted.
POLLY: Elizabeth's bottom's cleared up a treat.
(GEORGE, *who should be only half saying the speech, and altering it as he goes through, while* POLLY *doesn't give it much attention either.*)
GEORGE: Somehow society must be kept open, open at every level so that there are always options . . .
(GEORGE *winces and sits down.*)
Oh sod it, what have I sat on?
(*He fetches out a crumpled, brightly painted construction.*)
POLLY: It's The Ark. James was very proud of it.
GEORGE: Egg boxes. Always egg boxes. Miss Gainsborough has pushed the potentialities of egg boxes beyond man's wildest dreams. I reckon she must be getting a retainer from the Egg Marketing Board.
POLLY: It's true. All schools are the same.
GEORGE: What I want to know is when they take the crucial step from egg boxes to differential calculus. I believe that some people are better than others, better not because they're cleverer or more cultivated or God knows (*He laughs*) because they're better off, but—
POLLY: Are you going to do that?
GEORGE: What?
(POLLY *imitates his mid-sentence laugh.*)
I might. Why?
POLLY: Oh nothing.
(GEORGE *is nonplussed. He repeats the sequence without laughing.*)
You didn't laugh.
GEORGE: You said . . .
POLLY: No. I liked it.
GEORGE: It's a kind of grace, I think. The chosen few. If you can't produce such people because I'm not sure they're born not made, if you can't produce them, then what you can do, and this

is where socialism comes in, what you can do, is to show such people to themselves to link them up.

POLLY: I don't think Miss Gainsborough takes much notice of James. When I spoke to her last week she had to think before she even knew who he was.

GEORGE: Not surprising if there are thirty odd kids in the class. Anyway what does it matter. He is thick. We have got ourselves a thick child.

POLLY: Why should he be thick. I was a bright girl.

GEORGE: Heredity isn't a law of the land. If one only knew beforehand what one's children were going to be like. One ought to be able to see a trailer.

'Pause before you enter here
Lest from this womb a child appear.
Matchless he in face and skin
Fair of hair and clean of limb
But let not your mind your senses rob,
For he will be a stupid slob.'

POLLY: You laugh. If Andy were my son . .

GEORGE: Ah, but Andy is not your son, and Andy, thank God, has brains. Brains and beauty, the only untaxable inheritance. He never had any special treatment and look at him. An advertisement for the comprehensive system, brighter than ever I was and beautiful with it. I don't suppose you've seen him.

POLLY: He was in at tea-time, just for a minute.

GEORGE: Even now touching up some respectable girl in the Classic, Baker Street.

POLLY: So we can't just abandon him.

GEORGE: Andy?

POLLY: James.

(*Pause*)

I think he ought to go to Freshfields.

GEORGE: He is not going to Freshfields.

(*They have plainly had this conversation before.*)

Saunders Road, even with Miss Gainsborough is a very . . .

POLLY: I'm not having his whole life sacrificed to your principles.

GEORGE: His whole life. The kid is seven.

POLLY: Eight. You don't even know how old your own child is. Mozart was practically dead by the time he was his age. And why is it always the kids who suffer for the principle? Why is it, it's when it comes to schooling we always have to run up the Red Flag. Education with socialists, it's like sex, all right so long as you don't have to pay for it.

GEORGE: I am not having him educated with a load of shrill voiced Tory boys to buy him advancement which at the moment his talents do not appear to merit.

POLLY: Merit. How can you talk about merit. At seven.

GEORGE: Eight. I don't know what you're bothering about. The first sound he learns to imitate is that of a police klaxon. He is capable of detecting the subtlest distinctions in bodywork and performance. At the moment all indications are that we have brought into the world a tiny used car dealer.

POLLY: You see, even about something like this. you can't be serious. It's jokes, isn't it. Scoring. You are condemning him to . . .

GEORGE: (*irritated by* POLLY'S *intrusion*) I know what I'm condemning him to better than you do. I mean I had a state education.

POLLY: State education? You?

GEORGE: I went to a grammar school. (*Exits*)

POLLY: Grammar school! Founded about 400 BC and wearing long blue frocks, some grammar school!

(*The lights change to indicate the time has changed. Possibly a child cries again upstairs as the stage is dark.*

Door opens as George enters with BRIAN LOWTHER MP, *better dressed, better spoken but otherwise little different from* GEORGE.)

BRIAN: I was expecting another three o'clock do tonight. (*Yawns*) I reckon you must all be losing heart.

GEORGE: What I don't understand about you, Brian . . . what's matter?

BRIAN: I think I must have . . . (*He lifts his shoe*)

GEORGE: Yes, you have. It's that bloody dalmatian.

BRIAN: Better hop outside and get rid of it. (*Steps outside.*)

GEORGE: It's always here that's what gets me.

Why is it always us. Why does it always have to do its No. 2's at No 17.

BRIAN: It doesn't happen in Australia. Did you know that. When I went on that extremely boring parliamentary mission to that God forsaken . . .

(*He comes back.*)

. . . albeit, let it be said Commonwealth country, the thing that impressed me most, lifeguards apart, was the sweetness of the streets.

GEORGE: I reckon it's sussed we're the only Socialists in the street. Question that dog closely and you'll find it reads the *Daily Express*. If I ever catch it dropping its nasty canine britches round here again I'll kick it into the middle of next week. And her as well, Mrs Frederick Brodribb.

BRIAN: Ah ah. She sounds like a supporter of the Conservative and Unionist party. That's right. Shove the kettle on. I'm exhausted by that gruelling confrontation.

GEORGE: You're so sensible in many respects but when you actually get down to it, you're just as bad as the rest of them.

BRIAN: That's right.

GEORGE: I mean. Let's be clear what we are talking about. We are talking about the kind of class you can see any day of the week, shambling through Leeds or Nottingham, or Sheffield, shepherded by some broken down underpaid defeated old man of forty five. The class despises him. The passers by pity him. He is the secondary school teacher walking his charges to the baths, traipsing them through art galleries, trying not to see as they shove people off the pavement and make grabs at each others' balls.

BRIAN: I don't think you can blame that on Mrs Thatcher.

GEORGE: And on the other side we have a nice little crocodile of grey flannelled boys with little pink caps and high middle class voices going home to Children's Hour and Ballet shoes and Noel Streatfield. Which is very nice. Except that these others, they're going home to get their own teas in Peabody's Buildings. They're going home to margarine adverts and the *TV Times* and some of them, quite certainly, a fuck. At thirteen.

BRIAN: Bully for them.

GEORGE: All right. I know I'm being boring. That's quintessential Toryism. Any trace of passion or concern, they say you're being boring.

BRIAN: All right. I went to public school, of course. But looking back on it I think it may have been Borstal. I was taught by a succession of teachers all of whom seemed to have lost one or other of their limbs. It was cold, the food was disgusting, there was a great deal of what seemed to me entirely unnecessary running about and the sanitation was such as to make me a lifelong convert to constipation. And I would not send my worst enemy to public school. BUT if there are parents who are prepared to spend money on educating their children in such places . . . I am not going to stop them any more than I would stop them spending their money on power boats or go-kart racing or any other sophisticated way of throwing money down the drain. It's a question of freedom.

GEORGE: It is not a question of freedom, it's a question of justice.

(POLLY *comes downstairs, still carrying a pile of children's clothes, and wearing, as the simplest method of carrying it, a space helmet.* BRIAN *kisses her, and she sniffs at him appreciatively.*)

POLLY: I was hoping he'd bring you back.

GEORGE: That flaming dog has messed on our steps again. It's the one species I wouldn't mind seeing vanish from the face of the earth. I wish they were like the White Rhino—six of them left in the Serengeti National Park, and all males. Do you know what dogs are? They're those beer sodden soccer fans piling out of coaches in a layby, yanking out their cocks without a blush and pissing against the wall thirty nine in a row. I can't stand it.

POLLY: Question is whether you hate the coach party because they're like the dogs or hate the dogs because they're like the coach party.

GEORGE: I hate them all. Where did you get that suit from.

BRIAN: It's old. I got it when I was in the army. Chester, I think.

GEORGE: Why don't my suits look like that.

BRIAN: Taste.

GEORGE: Not taste. Nothing that implies one cares. It looks like it's grown on you, that suit. I want something like that, bred in the bone, without anybody thinking I've paused before the mirror and *chosen* it. I want an honest suit of good broadcloth . . . whatever that is. I want to look like Sir Kenneth Clark or a well-to-do solicitor in a Scottish town or the head of an Oxford College.

Such a suit as Montaigne might have worn, had he lived, or Marcus Aurelius.

BRIAN: And something wrong, that's the mark of real distinction: the tie too loosely knotted, a bit of dinner down the waistcoat.

POLLY: He's got that anyway

BRIAN: You should go to my tailor.

GEORGE: There you are, you see. My tailor, my doctor, my dentist. Your servants. With me it's the tailor, the doctor, the dentist. They're not mine. And I'm not theirs. Oh God, if it were only clothes though. Look at this dry pink plate of a face. Why didn't God give me a face on which the skin hangs in genial brown folds, the mouth is firm . . . but kindly . . . and with long large ears. Nearly every man of distinction has long ears.

(POLLY *and* BRIAN *involuntarily finger theirs.*)

BRIAN: In short you want to look like one of us and be like one of them.

GEORGE: When I walk down the street I want people to think 'there goes a sadder and wiser man'. Instead of which it's 'Christ. He looks a slob'. Must have a pee.

POLLY: Well don't wake the children. George's trouble is . . . are you eating . . .

BRIAN *shakes his head.*

He's a socialist but he doesn't like people.

BRIAN: Nor do I, much.

POLLY: You're a conservative. You don't have to.

BRIAN: No.

POLLY: There'll doubtless be a bit of something tasty in the oven, cooked by the faithful Mrs Minter. Oh, Brian, it's a nice life, yours.

BRIAN: I have an ordered life, if that's nice. All is order. Would you like some cake.

POLLY: I . . . would I like some cake? No. Why?

BRIAN: In the car there's a seed cake, a madeira cake, two dozen jam tarts, and various bunches of assorted flowers, stuff I've brought back from my constituency.

POLLY: Were you opening a fête?

BRIAN: Not especially. My constituency's run by a handful of big middle-class ladies. And I am their darling. Miss Cornfield, Miss Venables, Mrs Strickland. They love me.

POLLY: I wish ours was. You never see any of the women, ever. And it's all beer and butties. All I ever get is black pudding and black looks.

BRIAN: I just wish I had the energy of middle class women in middle age. They'd organised this sale of work. There they were. Sturdy legged, freckled forearmed, horny-elbowed ladies. And the sort of arms that fill with fat, flesh-coloured flesh their flowered frocks.

POLLY: And lots of straying shoulder straps.

BRIAN: Blood donors, cake makers, good mixers, stout old fashioned cart-horses, ploughing through day after day. Flustered only by sex, and sometimes not even by that. I could do with even a tenth of the energy they devote to flower arrangement.

(GEORGE *can come back anywhere here.*)

POLLY: They're a vanishing breed.

BRIAN: No. You're bit like that.

GEORGE: See!

BRIAN: But why, I kept wondering today. What drives the pistons? What is it that puts one firm fleshed sensible shoed leg in front of the other day after day after day. What thoughts do you think flood in as they ease lisle stockings down those massive legs? And in the decency of the bathroom slip into one of Arthur's old pyjama jackets?

POLLY: It's like me. Escaping boredom.

BRIAN: Boredom. They don't know the meaning of the word. And those firm capable hands. Fingers that can with equal facility bottle gooseberries, address envelopes, arrange peonies, bind wounds, decontaminate (in the event of a nuclear attack) an entire village, pray, pry and at life's end lie freckled and calm upon the sheets with no sense of life wasted or purpose lost. O fierce, foolish Tory ladies, I love you. Except that I, your Member of Parliament, your elected representative at the Palace of Westminster am an outrageous pouff.

GEORGE: Get on! Not outrageous at all. About as outrageous as St Augustine.

POLLY: He wasn't, was he? The sly devil. I'm surprised they never twig.

BRIAN: No. I'm just an agreeable young man who knows how to behave. No, they don't twig. Mind you, I've caught one or two of the 1922 Committee eyeing me uneasily lest I should suddenly launch myself on their vast pin striped bottoms. 'Can't have pouffs in the Conservative Party. No seat would be safe.'

POLLY: I don't think they're human at all, half of them.

BRIAN: Who?

POLLY: The 1922 Committee.

GEORGE: No. A good test is whether you can imagine them on the lavatory. I reckon they just go in there, stand behind the door for five minutes then come out again . . . just to convince you they're like everybody else.

BRIAN: It's a good job I got my seat without having to go through the cattle market. Normally you're not considered worthy of the trust of the electorate unless you've gone under the yoke with one of those upper class land girls from the front page of *Country Life*. Your credentials are a brace of spoiled and flaxen haired children, evidence that you have on at least two occasions hoisted yourself onto her massive thighs. Though quite how this makes one of more use to the Conservative Party I am at a loss to imagine. No. Give me a nice clean sad boy of nineteen any day.

GEORGE: Candidates will attend in company with their wives and/or boyfriends. That will be liberalism.

BRIAN: That's enough anyway. I can't stand talking about it. Some of them talk about nothing else. It's like making a career of being five foot eleven.

GEORGE: Brian, you see, is like me. What we both crave in life is order.

POLLY: Marriage and home is order.

BRIAN: Come on. Undies marinating in the basin, no nice cool places in the bed. And kids. There can't be order where there are children . . . children are anarchists, booby trapping the stairs . . .

GEORGE: Oh, if it were only the stairs. One's whole life mined with affection and grief and remorse and ingratitude. Perhaps *that's* what's wrong with me . . . perhaps in the ninth year of my second marriage . . .

POLLY: Tenth year.

GEORGE: Perhaps in the tenth year of my second marriage I realise too late that I am homosexual by nature. Except that I don't like men.

POLLY: You don't like anybody.

GEORGE: Look at Brian. He is still a free man. Look at me . . . tethered like Gulliver by a thousand tiny ropes to every object in this house. Festooned with the fruit of a hundred visits to the Portobello Road, weighted down with jelly moulds, bread crocks, brass, old photographs. Yes and children. You're right, they're part of it. Objects like the rest, except that they've been manufactured on the premises, in this century, in our lifetime and we haven't quite found a place for them yet. But they're possessions and ornaments. And they've got to be polished in order to do us credit.

POLLY: Here we go again.

GEORGE: Anyway, I can go back to Oxford any time I want.

ENID'S VOICE: Hello?

POLLY: Oh God, it's Enid. What's she doing here?

(*She runs for the stairs door.*)

BRIAN: Who is it? Don't abandon me.

(GEORGE *also hides.*

ENID, POLLY*'s mother, enters with a large canvas bag. She is a jolly, slightly raffish lady of about sixty, made up in rather a slapdash way somewhat Bohemian.*)

ENID: Hello, anybody in? It's me. Oh!

BRIAN: My name's Lowther, a friend of George's. I'm his pair, We've just been . . .

ENID: Come again.

BRIAN: In the house. Voting.

ENID: Oh! I'm Enid, her mother. Never a popular person with my daughter, I'm afraid. She's doubtless just run upstairs?

BRIAN: No. She . . .

ENID: She generally does. Took the wrong turning somewhere in childhood. Devoted to her father. Hates me. Of course she was denied the breast. It always tells.

(*She has eventually put all her belongings down and holds out her hand.*)

How do you do. Sorry about the paint stains. I've just been to my sex class . . . well actually it's my life class but this term we're on the nude. We've got rather a nice young man posing at the moment. He's rather a dish. But, I suspect, a nancy. Like every-

body else these days. Not that there's anything wrong in that. More power to his elbow, that's what I say.

(GEORGE *has come out of hiding and crept up behind her.*)

I say! There's a strange hand on my breast. I think I must be being interfered with.

(POLLY *comes back.*)

GEORGE: Hello, you lovely old Communist.

POLLY: George. Mother. For goodness' sake. That really is unnatural. George is the only person I know actually to be besotted with his mother-in-law. If everybody was like you, music hall comedians would go out of business.

GEORGE: They have. We don't mind, do we, Enid.

ENID: No. We have a disgusting relationship. (*Kisses him.*) The nicest thing about being old, dear, is that you can do anything you like with a man and nobody thinks you're flirting.

GEORGE: This has cheered me up. But you never come on a Thursday.

ENID: I've got to go to the doctors tomorrow so I thought I'd come today en route from the Polytechnic. What're you depressed about?

POLLY: He's got nothing to be depressed about at all.

ENID: My daughter. A very understanding person. (*To* BRIAN.) Have you any children?

POLLY: He's not married.

ENID: He's quite capable of telling me that himself. He *is* a member of Parliament. So domineering. Oh, Polly, look at your verbena toxicana. It's absolutely parched. And it's requirements are minimal. That's why I chose it.

POLLY: I don't like cacti. They're the only plants I don't like.

ENID: It's not a cacti. It's a succulent. Give you a plant and it's like sending it to the salt mines. Come along now let's give you a drinkie. That's better. All gone. All gone.

POLLY: I've never been any good with cacti. They need expertise.

ENID: Expertise. One thimbleful of water every blue moon does not constitute expertise. Otherwise we should all be fellows of the Royal Horticultural Society, eh, Mr Lowther.

GEORGE: Let's have a look at your masterpiece.

ENID: I'm not entirely happy with it. The shoulders are good, you see, but I've never quite got the hang of. Whereas Zoë, at the next easel, she's just the reverse. But rather fetching, don't you think.

GEORGE: I'll take it on trust.

ENID: And he will insist on not wearing a stitch. Zoë gets quite agitated. Normally, you see, they wear what I believe is called a posing pouch.

POLLY: Oh, mother.

ENID: Don't you oh mother me. I know we're not supposed to be interested at our age. Children always assume the sexual lives of their parents come to a grinding halt at their conception.

POLLY: But you're so *New Statesman* and old-fashioned about it. It proclaims your 'Thirties upbringing.

ENID: If that's the only thing that proclaims my 'Thirties upbringing I think I'm doing very nicely.

POLLY: We're all emancipated now.

ENID: Not in Stanmore we're not. Things are very different there. And it's all very well to sneer at the *New Statesman* but in the 'Thirties it was the only thing kept one sane. You're quite shy, aren't you?

BRIAN: Me? No.

ENID: I think you are. I know one thing. If I had my time over again I wouldn't have daughters. I'd have geraniums. At least geraniums are grateful. Where've I seen you before. Television. I can't remember what it was you were talking about. You never can on television can you. More freedom was it, or more control. Something anyway. I quite agree though. Mind you, all we ever watch is the wrestling. I saw a lovely programme the other night. With badgers. No dolphins. And the D of Edinburgh. He says dolphins are quite intelligent. And very friendly. But then he's the D of Edinburgh's so I suppose they would be.

BRIAN: I wish I'd kept my mouth shut.

ENID: Why? It seemed very sensible to me.

BRIAN: Anybody who stands up and says total freedom may not be a good thing is immediately swamped with appreciative letters from old ladies whose twin hobbies are prize cucumbers and the castration of sex offenders.

GEORGE: Exactly. You look round and find you've become right marker for the Awkward Squad . . . evangelists in belted raincoats, defeated prep schoolmasters, hard mouthed ladies in gay hats.

BRIAN: Regimental Sergeant Majors in the WVS.

GEORGE: It's the SS Save Society by Stopping Sex, Stupid Sods.

BRIAN: Opinions come in sets nowadays. You're either one of us or one of them. Like this.

(*He takes out a postcard.*)

POLLY: Nice postcard. Victoria Park, Oswestry. There's no message.

BRIAN: No.

POLLY: Who sent it?

BRIAN: I don't know. Some lunatic.

POLLY: Can I have it.

(BRIAN *shrugs and* POLLY *puts it on the mantelpiece or sticks it in the corner of the mirror.*)

GEORGE: What is it you're off to the doctors for. If it's infectious don't tell me or I shall certainly get it.

ENID: I very much doubt it. Hot flushes, ladies' diseases, nothing I could possibly come out with in company.

GEORGE: Probably psychosomatic.

ENID: I don't think Dr Proctor has heard of psychosomatic. He's about twice as old as I am, and for the last fifteen years he's been putting everything down to the change of life. And I always have to take my clothes off. MD in his case stands for Mucky Devil. However one shouldn't complain, should one. Mr Lowther? One's lucky to reach sixty without some darns and patches in the human fabric.

GEORGE: Are you sixty?

ENID: Sixty two dear. Yes, sixty two. I'm into the home stretch now. The coda. The run up to the spring board. Times up, come in No 17. No no, you want to say. Not me. *Her.* I haven't had a long enough turn. She started off ages before me. But that's where the management exercises its absolute discretion.

GEORGE: Enid, you are all right, aren't you.

ENID: Course I am, dear. It's just an old woman rambling on. I haven't done too badly for all that. Though occasionally the system needs a little prompting. I've made it a rule never to go far without a packet of prunes. Don't pull a face, dear. Sex and bowels, I know. Shut up, Enid. I shall end up in a Home for Insufferables in Rickmansworth.

GEORGE: Not while I'm here, you won't.

ENID: Oh, George. (*Kisses him*) No. No. Or I shall be better company than a lady should. Better be making tracks. Home again, home again, jiggety jig.

BRIAN: I can lift you as far as Baker Street.

ENID: In a motor? How marvellous.

GEORGE: Are you sure you're all right going home at this time of night?

POLLY: It's only a quarter to eleven.

GEORGE: I thought you might be nervous.

ENID: Nervous— Of what? Rape. In Stanmore. No such luck. Anyway all sex is rape in Stanmore, they're such an unforthcoming lot. Where's my bag?

GEORGE: Good God, Enid. It weighs a ton.

ENID: I know. It's one of the things about getting older, there are more and more things one can't do without. In the old days when I was a student at the Slade I used to set off in the morning, slip a sandwich and a packet of ciggies into my skirt pocket and I was set up for the day. Nowadays if I don't have everything . . . books, Kleenex, pad, envelopes, scarf, cardigan . . . I'm miserable. And most times I never open the book, write a letter, wipe my nose or put on my cardigan. But I wouldn't be settled without it.

POLLY: Come on, Enid. Brian's waiting.

BRIAN: It's all right.

ENID: Coming, just (*powdering her face*) just papering over the cracks. Do you mind if I just pop upstairs to the lavvy?

POLLY: Oh God, that's another half hour. Don't wake the children.

ENID: I don't really want to go but one never knows whether one's going to see another, does one. (*Exits by stairs door.*)

BRIAN: How's Andy?

POLLY: He's doing his mock A levels next week. He's fine.

GEORGE: You see, *that's* news to me. I never even see him. The only one of the family who appears to have inherited my intellectual abilities and I never see him from one week end to the next. This is simply his campaign headquarters, he's here just long enough to get some more lead put in his pencil, then off.

POLLY: All imagination. He's not even my flesh and blood and I know him better than you do.
GEORGE: You see him occasionally, that's why.
(ENID *enters from stairs door with* GEOFF.)
ENID: I've found an unauthorised man on the landing.
POLLY: Geoff, I'd forgotten you were in the house.
GEOFF: I've measured it all up.
POLLY: Geoff's making us an airing cupboard.
GEORGE: I hope it's all right tomorrow.
ENID: Oh, yes, silly. Now young man, let us hie hence in yon Aston Martin.
BRIAN: It's an MG actually.
POLLY: Geoff lives Notting Hill way. Do you want lifting. Brian you don't know Geoff do you.
BRIAN: How do you do. It'll be a bit of a squeeze.
ENID: Good.
(GEORGE *goes out with them carrying* ENID*'s bag.*)
ENID: George, did I ever tell you: Sickert once pinched my bottom. You could see the mark for weeks.
POLLY *and* GEOFF *are left.* POLLY *is flustered and tired.*
POLLY: Good night, Geoff. I still haven't got your number.
GEOFF: Haven't you? I'm not on the phone.
POLLY: I never looked out that shrapnel.
GEOFF: What.
POLLY: That shrapnel. Last week, I . . .
GEOFF: Yes, if it's not any trouble.
POLLY: No, it's not any trouble. I've been keeping my eyes open for the other, but I haven't . . .
GEOFF: I fancy you.
POLLY: Yes, I do. I mean . . . yes.
GEOFF: See you.

(POLLY *and* GEORGE *now prepare for bed.* POLLY *clearing up the house.* GEORGE *is also tidying up.* POLLY *has a transistor with her which is playing chamber music.*
A recurrent theme in the play should be GEORGE *switching off this transistor whenever he can and* POLLY *switching it back on again when she notices. She should come back in her night dress, with transistor and do some incongruous job that suddenly strikes her, like polishing some brass ornament or touching up a picture frame with paint.*
She goes out eventually turning the lights off, but GEORGE *comes back turns one of them on, now in his pyjamas. He looks at himself in the mirror.*)

GEORGE: When does it happen? When did I turn into this? This sagging cistern, lagged with an overcoat of flesh that gets thicker and thicker every year. The skin sags, the veins break down, more and more galleries are sealed off. And you never notice. There is no pain. No warning shots. No bells ring back at base to indicate that another section of the front line has collapsed. This is the body I live with and hoist into bed each night. I heave it desperately from place to place, dump it with less and less enthusiasm on someone else's body, then lug it off again and go about my business, as a representative of the people. Save me, O God from the Car Wash and the lawnmower on Sundays, the steak house and the whisky a Go Go. Deliver me from leisure and salmon pink trousers. Give me the Roman virtues, O God. Dignity, sobriety. And at the last, let my heart not be whisked across London preceded by fourteen police cars, sounding their klaxons, the transfer of my liver not be discussed by trendy surgeons (who consent willingly to make up) on late night television programmes. May I die, as I have lived, just about in one piece and my carcase not be scavenged as soon as the breath can more or less safely be said to have left my body. Shovel me into the dustbin, O Lord, without reducing me to offal in some sterile and gleaming knackers yard. And make me a decent man, O God.

(*He turns off the light, and for a second or two the stage is dark. During the last speech the sound of chamber music from* POLLY*'s transistor could be heard.*
This now ceases, as the outside door is unlocked and opened, by ANDY, *George's son.*
He is a boy of seventeen, seen only by the light of the fridge which he opens and takes out a bottle of milk. He takes it to the mirror and drinks it, staring at himself. Goes close and looks at it for a second. Puts the milk back in the fridge, and goes out by the stairs door.
Lights dim.

The same. A few months later. Sunday.
GEORGE *and* ENID *are packing up some rubbish, chiefly consisting of books;* GEORGE *is clearing out his bookshelves, running his finger down the shelves and selecting volumes he doesn't want.*)
GEORGE: What time is it? I'm supposed to put the chicken in.
ENID: Shall I do it.
GEORGE: No. It's all ready. I just have to pop it in.
ENID: I hope it's free range?
GEORGE: Fat lot you care. No. It's from one of those battery farms down near the cottage. They crack on they're Free Range establishments; a few of the hens who've earned privileges for good behaviour are allowed out in front of the sheds. Meanwhile the rest are bound and gagged inside. Battery farms. Silence, low sheds and the chimney. The blueprint for the concentration camp. Odd depressions in the ground mock the trippers herding to the coast, stir memories of woods in Silesia, huts in a clearing and a sergeant being sick by a wall. Here we are, bird. Shorn of claws and beak, slung fluttering on some overhead shuttle, to be scalded, plucked and blinded and arrive at last upon our kitchen table, plump and white and comfortable with a lemon and one or two onions to give you the savour in death you never had in life. In you go at Mark 6.
ENID: Where's Polly?
GEORGE: On safari in the East End with her faithful bearer. Apparently there is this back street in Bermondsey where Chippendale chairs are being given away for a song by people who haven't the sense they were born with. Or so they've heard.
ENID: Is there time for a cup of tea?
GEORGE: I loathe Sunday. Thank God the kids are at the Zoo.
ENID: Where's the tea. It used to be in this thing.
GEORGE: Ah no, there's been a radical re-thinking of the kitchen. It's now in the tin with the picture of the Royal Wedding.
ENID: Hm. I remember buying one of those at the time. I don't know. Everything's catching up. These days you can hardly keep ahead of the past. This shelf is new too. And this cupboard.
GEORGE: Yes, both erected by Geoff, the Nazarene carpenter. I wonder whether Jesus did odd carpentry jobs round people's houses? 'I'm sorry, Mrs Cohen, I shan't be in for the next forty days. No. Not really a holiday. Just coming to terms with myself really!' Now Enid do I want *I've Seen 'Em All* Memoirs of the Head Commissionaire at Claridges.
ENID: No.
GEORGE: Or *The City of Nottingham Civic Handbook 1953*? 'New factories in the Green Belt make an imposing prospect'. Don't want that.
ENID: Doesn't it bother you, them going off together.
GEORGE: The amanuensis? No. I mean, she wants company. But I reckon he'd as soon stuff a Chesterfield. Anyway it doesn't mean as much to them. They aren't always sniffing round for it the way we are. He said.
ENID: Here we go, dear. We always end up talking about sex. It only happens with you.
GEORGE: Anyway I'm the one who has to mind his P's and Q's. I've had one turn already. She's only on her first leg. You should have liked Liz, the first Mrs Oliver. A much maligned woman.
ENID: By whom?
GEORGE: Me chiefly. No homemaker she. She was a slattern, a soft, amiable, lovable slut. We fixed up the wedding three times and she just couldn't be bothered to get up. Politically, I need hardly say, she was of the left.
(GEORGE *possibly gets a photograph of him, Liz and* ANDY *as a child.*)
A placid and utterly unmilitant presence at every sit-in. And the house . . . or flat as it was then always upside down. You'd keep on finding young men from the provinces sleeping on the floor. Fabled names in the annals of the New Left. All with monosyllabic names . . . Stan, Mike, Les, Norm. As if to have two syllables in one's name were an indication of social pretension and to prove themselves of the true faith their names had to be circumcised and trimmed of surplus syllables. What was I talking about?
ENID: (*still looking at books*) Forgotten, dear. Wasn't listening.
GEORGE: Liz. She was Mrs Jellaby, I suppose, which is partly why I swopped her for one of the crab-apple jelly brigade. No offence.
ENID: I don't mind, dear. Polly's always taken more after Leonard than she does after me.

GEORGE: I don't know that it matters. Andy was brought up on baked beans and Rice Krispies. It doesn't seem to have done him any harm. He was a real battery boy.
ENID: How is he?
(GEORGE *shrugs.*)
He has grown. Yes. Seventeen. He's found his feet . . . and other parts of his anatomy.
ENID: You used to be such pals.
GEORGE: We did, didn't we. Much more than I ever was with my dad. But of course our ages were much further apart.
ENID: I don't know where she gets all this baking her own bread from. Hard to find a more fervent disciple of bought cakes than me.
GEORGE: She's simply conducting a private rearguard action against the present day. No, they weren't. Good God. My father was actually younger. He was closer to me in age than I am to Andy. He seemed ancient, always. It's ludicrous. To look at us, you'd think we had a marvellous going on. We have two establishments, one here and the cottage. They're run in nice conjunction. Not a plum ripens before it is forthwith translated into jam. Not an egg is laid before it is summarily drowned in waterglass. Even the hedgerows are scoured and their wild, heedless fruit thrust beneath a polite crust. Oh no. There's nothing wasted in this house, least of all opportunity. Scarcely does a plant poke its head above the soil before it's rudely dragged forth to jostle tulips in a vase. Sewing, reaping, stewing, steeping, the larder's stocked as if any day General Paulus might invest the doorstep for a siege of indeterminate duration. The larder is lined with jams in flavours of incestuous proximity . . . melon and marrow, lemon and ginger. Nothing, nothing is wasted. Nothing is allowed to break out of the endless cycle of retrenchment and regeneration. That cigarette end you have discarded, vicar, it will find its way onto the compost heap. Part once more of the continuing process. Did you leave an old razor blade in the bathroom, madam. No. Don't apologise. It will go towards a bus destined for Addis Ababa.
ENID: There is something wrong, I suppose, if we have to be dragged into the future. We ought to go forward with firm jaw and clear brow, all in profile like a Soviet Poster. Instead of looking back, dragged behind those awful hard-faced men in the Business Supplement.
GEORGE: I wish sometimes we could just go out and buy something when we need it, without all this performance of consumers guide and best buy. I tell you. We bought that gas oven last year. There was that much consultation and consideration we might have been getting a divorce. Your house, you see, Enid, isn't like this. This isn't a house. It's a setting we've devised for ourselves. We're trying to get something over, though God knows what it is. Think of your house . . . your kitchen . . . that foxed and fly-spotted fridge on legs, your old Belling gas oven. Wood tops, stripped white and ridged by scrubbing and use rather than two days in a bath of caustic at the back of the Fulham Road. Use, not looks. Old sossed down chairs, a house that's grown out of the life lived there, not a setting in which that life is lived.
ENID: You are an old snob, George. More right wing every day. What you want is an old-fashioned middle-class household.
GEORGE: That's not right wing. But I do. The middle class family . . . the most exclusive interior decorator in the world. An old brown carpet slipper of a house, comfortable, roomy and lived in. This . . . this is scenery. It's been dropped in from the flies.
ENID: It'll age. It'll mellow.
GEORGE: The nicest part of your house, the thing that stamps it straightaway, so that you know exactly where you are, what level of society you're moving at, is the vestibule. That bit between the front and the inside door. Plants, a pot containing various of Leonard's broken walking sticks. A croquet mallet and an old lacrosse stick, and a disgusting raincoat. I know that that particular sort of shabby gentility will always elude us. Our house will never look like that if we live till we're 95. Better the past a void than survive like this. We're accomplices, Polly and me, with snake-hipped young men totting up back lanes in Grimthorpe and Featherstone, knocking on doors in Bishop Auckland, peering in through barricades of plants and ornaments for miners' widows gone a bit silly and willing to trade the polished artefacts of a life's history for a few quid. Reft of their associations, stripped like the eternal pine of the polish of memory and affection and association and brought back from northern counties to this sly southern air across the saddle bow of some chiffon scarved Genghis Khan with a shop down Camden Passage and an eye for the coming thing. You're quiet.
ENID: (*laughs*) Good job one of us is. I'm all right.
GEORGE: Have you been feeling any better
ENID: Oh yes. Yes. Heaps.
GEORGE: Don't want you. Nor you. (*Chucking books in the box. He stands back and looks at the bookshelf.*)
It's still no different. All those greens and yellows and blues. It looks like a caravan site in book form.
ENID: Oh no, love. They're very cheerful. I like a bright bookcase.
GEORGE: There again. Why don't my bookshelves look like my tutors did . . . faded crumbling browns, sun bleached dustwrapper?
ENID: It's what's in them that counts.
GEORGE: They've got no dignity. They're on the game. Tarts for some smart publishing ponce. 'Hello, dearie, don't you recognise me in my new yellow plastic? It's Jane Austen, dear, in my new uniform edition. Do you like it? We've had some times together, haven't we? You've taken me to bed more times than I care to remember.' Look out. They're here.
(GEORGE *and* ENID *now sit silent as* POLLY *and* GEOFF *slowly edge into the room.*)
POLLY: Just wait till you see this!
GEOFF: It's the most incredible thing, George, it really is. Look at that:
GEORGE: But it's a tombstone.
POLLY: Well, it was. It isn't now.
ENID: It's going to take some cleaning.
GEOFF: I'll give it a wash.
ENID: Where did it come from?
GEOFF: Fell off the back of a churchyard.
GEORGE: 'Sacred to the memory of Joseph Banks, who departed this life August 16, 1842. Aged 28 years.'
POLLY: How's the chicken?
GEORGE: It won't be done yet.
POLLY: I'd better get my skates on.
GEORGE: Did Brian say he was coming?
POLLY: He wasn't sure. Give him a ring. Leonard and the children are staying at the zoo, aren't they? Enid, come and help me lay the table.
(GEORGE *dials.*)
ENID: Oh yes, sorry, dear.
GEORGE: Lines to Manchester are engaged. Please try again later. I'm not ringing Manchester.
ENID: I shouldn't fancy it. What are you going to do with it?
POLLY: No need to do anything with it. It's something in its own right.
GEOFF: I'm going to make it into a coffee table.
GEORGE: And what about him?
POLLY: Who?
GEORGE: Joseph Banks, now lying in some nameless grave, patiently awaiting the Resurrection. Well, this is it, Joseph. Everlasting life as a coffee table in Highgate. Enid, do you fancy a walk on to the end to get some beer?
ENID: Lovely. Hold on while I just gild the lily. Then we'll pop along to the local.
GEORGE: No. Not the local. It's just the nearest pub. It's only the local if you subscribe to some nice consoling myth of community life.
POLLY: And don't stop there boozing. This won't be too long. And where are you taking all those?
(GEORGE *is carrying out the carton of books.*)
GEORGE: These, my dear, are going to their long home.
POLLY: Oh, George, they might come in handy for . . .
GEORGE: No. They would not come in handy for anything. They are not going to Oxfam; they are not going to the Thrift Shop. They are going into the dustbin where they belong.
POLLY: Perhaps Geoff could use them.
GEORGE: No. Nobody can use them. Nobody is going to use them. They are rubbish, waste, junk. (*He is triumphant.*) DUSTBIN HO!
(GEORGE *and* ENID *depart and we hear the clank of a dustbin lid.* POLLY *comes over to* GEOFF. *They hold each other.* GEOFF *with*

his back to the audience staring over her shoulder at the bookcase.)

GEOFF: Has he read all these?

(*He picks up a book, without disengaging* POLLY.)

POLLY: Doubt it. That's mine. Empson. *Seven Types of Ambiguity.* I actually made notes on it.

GEOFF: Would I like that?

POLLY: (*almost laughing*) No. (*Then seeing the offence*) No.

GEOFF: I might.

POLLY: You wouldn't.

GEOFF: You mean, I wouldn't understand it.

POLLY: No. I mean, yes. But I shouldn't bother. Most of these are a waste of time.

GEOFF: Is it non-fiction?

POLLY: Yes. (*Again laughing and upsetting him.*)

GEOFF: Is it? I'm not fit to read them or they're too hard for me to read.

POLLY. They wouldn't interest you, Geoff. Read what you like. Don't go into a huff. What does it matter, anyway. It's all going to be cassettes now, isn't it?

(*Sound of someone coming in and they break up.* BRIAN *enters with a couple of bottles of wine.* GEOFF *kneels at the gravestone, cleaning it.*)

BRIAN: Here I am with my little lot. Am I welcome or am I not?

(*He raises his hand in greeting to* GEOFF, *sees the stone and begins to advance on it.*)

POLLY: (*quickly*) Come and give me a hand with the lunch.

BRIAN: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

(BRIAN *winks at* GEOFF.)

You making yourself useful?

GEOFF: You bet.

BRIAN: Friend of yours? What's the matter?

(BRIAN *walks round it, without saying anything, then steps over it.*)

BRIAN: Somebody walked over your grave? Ho ho.

(*He touches* GEOFF *with his shoe.*)

GEOFF: (*in an undertone*) Knock it off, will you?

POLLY: George is a bore. He's just thrown away a whole jorum of stuff. They'd have made such a lovely parcel for Oxfam. Geoff, nip out and see whether he's chucked out anything worth keeping. I can't bear it. You can have whatever you want.

BRIAN: Do you think Oxfam ever return anything? Oxfam graciously acknowledges the receipt of your gift but feel they must return this pair of old knickers as they would only aggravate the situation. How many are we? (*As he lays the table.*)

POLLY: Five. I don't think Andy's in. Give him a shout.

(BRIAN *shouts upstairs.*)

BRIAN: Andy! No.

(POLLY *scatters potato peelings on the floor.*)

POLLY: Oh Dame Agnes, if you could see me now.

(*She still has hold of the book* GEOFF *picked out and is looking at her notes.*)

BRIAN: Dame Agnes who?

POLLY: Dame Agnes Bemrose, Mistress of Girton, the apple of whose eye I for a short time was.

BRIAN: Are we having a pudding?

POLLY: No-o. She thought I had a great future.

BRIAN: As what?

POLLY: It was never specified. I once fancied I'd like to be Mistress of Girton, then I decided I'd settle for being a lady novelist, rather along the lines of Virginia Woolf, and then that too dwindled into getting into the BBC. And now here I am, ankle deep in blighted hopes and potato peelings. 'Remember, Miss Baker, there is no Nobel Prize for Knitting.'

BRIAN: I never thought of you as at all academic. You're not that sort at all. Like me.

POLLY: Did you never want to go to university?

BRIAN: Didn't mind. Could have done. Went straight into the works instead. I wanted to get started.

POLLY: I was a bright girl. I had some interesting ideas on Coleridge's inner landscape. Then George came down to speak to the Labour Club one night in the Spring Term and that was it. You'd have done very well.

BRIAN: Not then. Now perhaps. I liked provincial life. The works all week, rugger with the boys on Saturdays and a piss-up in Knutsford afterwards. I reckon it was the army changed me. But for a certain medical corporal I was all headed for a smart wedding at the cathedral and two pages of photographs in *Cheshire Life*, winter holidays in the Bahamas and two piggy children at Oundle.

POLLY: Education didn't alter me one bit. Falling in love, sex, the children, they've altered me. I had a good education but it never went to my head, somehow. It should be a journey ending up with you at a different place. It didn't take with me. My degree was a kind of innoculation. I got just enough education to make me immune to it for the rest of my life. Now I couldn't tell you the first thing about Coleridge's inner landscape. All wasted.

BRIAN: I don't want to know about Coleridge, thank you. I just want my lunch. Or dinner as my father the millowner would say.

POLLY: Anyway, it's a good thing I didn't get a better degree or George would never have married me.

BRIAN: Come on.

POLLY: True. That's why he got rid of the first Mrs Oliver. She was too clever by half. But I haven't changed. Coleridge's imagery. Odd bits of junk. Picking up bits of stuff other people haven't spotted. What medical corporal?

BRIAN: Never mind.

POLLY: Now Andy's talking about leaving school, doing something useful. I haven't dared tell George. What does it matter? It doesn't get you any further, education.

BRIAN: It's not designed to. Or rather it is designed to, and that's what's wrong with it. Or so George would say. We in the Conservative Party think exactly the opposite.

POLLY: I don't know what you think at all. You don't care much, do you?

BRIAN: Not much, no.

POLLY: And parliament? That either?

BRIAN: Passes the time. Fills in that awkward gap between the cradle and the grave.

(BRIAN *sees the postcard he gave* POLLY *stuck in the mirror. He quite viciously takes it out, and tears it up.*)

POLLY: Brian, I liked that.

BRIAN: Here's another one instead.

(*Takes out another postcard.*)

POLLY: Is it the same one?

BRIAN: I expect so.

POLLY: No message. Do you get lots of them?

BRIAN: Not lots. Every three months maybe.

POLLY: But why? It must be somebody who's mad.

BRIAN: Not entirely. I always get one if I've been in the news, or on television. If I raise my voice anywhere.

POLLY: What for, if there's no message? It's not even like an anonymous letter.

BRIAN: Oh, but there is a message, you see. He knows what it means and I know what it means.

POLLY: What?

BRIAN: A long time ago, at least, not so long really, when I'd just come out of the army and was still full-time at the works. Before I was an MP. Quite a long time before, in fact, he must have been very smart to pick it out I was the same person.

POLLY: What same person?

BRIAN: I was had up for you know what with some youth in Victoria Park, Oswestry.

POLLY: I never knew that.

BRIAN: I should hope not. Mind you, it was so dull. It wasn't even in the papers. But *he* knows, whoever he is.

POLLY: How foul. Why don't you go to the police?

BRIAN: What for? It's not blackmail. It's just a picture of Victoria Park, Oswestry. It's actually new, that one. I haven't had that one before. The other one used to be rather a nice sepia photograph. They've obviously run out of stock.

POLLY: Well I'm not having it up there. (*She tears it up.*) Why did you never say?

BRIAN: It's funny the place, really, isn't it. Lavatories, public parks, cinemas in the afternoon, the places where it happens. It can't ever be tragic, sad even, the setting's so banal. Nothing to say, why should I? Every now and again somebody pops down the road to the post. I've got now so that I can almost feel them coming.

POLLY: People are foul.

BRIAN: Yours, A Well-Wisher.

(GEOFF *comes back, and* POLLY *stars to bustle round again.*)

GEOFF: What a load of old rubbish!

BRIAN: So why all this fuss about James. If it didn't take with you, why bother.
POLLY: He's a boy. He's got to get on in the world. He can't rely on being seduced at the Labour Club dance.
BRIAN: He could always try the Conservative Club.
POLLY: Watch it, you'll corrupt the youth.
(GEOFF *is still cleaning the gravestone.*)
BRIAN: Youth? Servants. (*He taps* GEOFF *with his foot.*)
POLLY: Geoff isn't servants, are you, love?
GEOFF: Aren't I?
POLLY: No, course you're not.
GEOFF: No, say it. Servants. Yes. We're servants for the people who aren't used to having servants, servants who don't make you feel guilty about it. That's probably because you're not sure our lives aren't better than yours.
POLLY: Look, Geoff. I said I was sorry.
GEOFF: Skip it.
(GEORGE *enters breathless.*)
GEORGE: Where's the bucket?
POLLY: What bucket?
GEORGE: The bucket. Quick, quick, for God's sake, where's the bucket?
POLLY: What bucket?
GEORGE: The *bucket.* The bowl, anything. Come *on.* It's the dog. It's there.
POLLY: What dog? Oh no, George, you can't.
GEORGE: Yes, I bloody well can.
(*He rushes out with the dripping pail. Shout outside as he throws the water. He returns, satisfied.*)
Got it. Purple in the face as it was passing some particularly recalcitrant stool. It leaped out of its skin. Sodden.
POLLY: It's not the dog's fault.
GEORGE: Maybe. Sometimes I think St Francis of Assisi was barking up the wrong tree. Of course it's the dog's fault. If it will choose our step.
(*He is about to throw another one, when there is a knocking at the door.* GEORGE *opens it, bucket in hand, sees who it is, turns round smartly and comes away from the door, followed in by* MRS BRODRIBB.)
MRS B: One moment, young man. Some person on these premises has just thrown a bucket of water over my dog. I have just met him running down the street soaked to the skin.
GEORGE: Your dog, Mrs Brodribb?
MRS B: My dog, Mr Oliver.
POLLY: What makes you think it was here?
GEORGE: Polly. If by dog, Mrs Brodribb, you mean that polka dotted sewage machine on legs, yes. It was me.
MRS B: So, you admit it . . . he admits it. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a man in your position an unprovoked assault.
GEORGE: Unprovoked? Unprovoked? Mrs Brodribb, I have lost count of the number of times that creature has fouled our doorstep. It's every time he shoves his arse outside your door.
MRS B: Arse! Oh!
POLLY: It does happen rather often, Mrs Brodribb. I'm sure my husband didn't mean to harm him, only to teach him a lesson.
MRS B: If you wanted to attack a defenceless dog why didn't you choose one your own size. They have to go somewhere.
GEORGE: Then why not on your own doorstep then?
MRS B: Because he needs the walk. Besides, you should be flattered.
POLLY: Flattered!
MRS B: When Max . . .
GEOFF: Max!
MRS B: (*silencing him with a look*) . . . pauses by your doorstep he is not simply relieving himself. He is leaving a message, a sign, a note.
GEORGE: A message, is it? Then I wish he wasn't quite such a frequent correspondent. Your dog, Mrs Brodribb, is a proper little Mme de Sévigné. Besides, who is it leaving a message for, for God's sake? Not for anybody at this address. We haven't any dogs. We have a goldfish and a hamster. Surely he's not contemplating starting up a deviant relationship with them?
MRS B: Don't you be sarcastic with me. I don't want any of your House of Commons manners here. I know one thing. I shan't ever vote Socialist after this. Not that I ever did.
GEORGE: And another thing Mrs Brodribb. This leaving notes business. Presumably it's to do with . . . I'm sorry to have to mention this word . . . but its has to do with sex, hasn't it?
MRS B: (*who has been circling round the company, stares long and deep into* BRIAN*'s face*) I've seen you on television too. You're all the same.
GEORGE: Sex, Mrs Brodribb. But Max can go on leaving little notes for other dogs on our step until he's blue in the face, but I bet you never let him out to back them up, do you? Except once a year with some other equally spotted bitch under medical supervision at forty guineas a time in some foul kennels in Hounslow. So what's all this message leaving, Mrs Brodribb. What are all these notes. I'll tell you what Max is, Mrs Brodribb. He's all talk and no trousers. But for future reference I am not going to have my doorstep used as a poste-restante by frustrated dalmatians who never come. And I mean come, Mrs Brodribb.
POLLY: We have got a bit fed up of it.
MRS B: It? It? What you call it, Mrs Oliver, is an extremely sensitive creature, twice champion in his class at Cruft's and a thoroughbred dalmatian. That dog, as you call it, has ten times more breeding than you have.
GEORGE: Mrs Brodribb. Shit has no pedigree.
MRS B: Did you hear that? Did you hear that? Such . . . language, and from one of our elected representatives. But I give you fair warning, if there is any repetition of this incident, if you ever interfere with Max again, I shall be forced to fetch my husband, diabetic though he be. And that's my last word.
GEOFF: Aw, piss off, you old cow.
(ENID *comes in with a jug just as* MRS BRODRIBB *is going out.*)
MRS B: If we had a real Conservative government I should have you horsewhipped.
(ENID *is mystified.* GEOFF *bursts out laughing, and there is a general hubbub.* ENID *goes upstage into the kitchen with* GEORGE *and* BRIAN *and is told about* MRS BRODRIBB *in half-heard dialogue which goes on under the action, from various people.*)
ALL: She's a silly woman from the other end of the road. George just threw a bucket of water over her dog. The dalmatian. Ought to have thrown it over her. Quite. Who wants beer? How many are we? I hope the chicken'll be big enough. Where's salt and pepper, etc, etc.
(POLLY *comes downstage where* GEOFF *is still fiddling with the tombstone.*)
POLLY: Come on, Geoff.
GEOFF: In a sec.
(ANDY *comes in by the outside door.*)
GEORGE: Now. I never forget a face. That, unless I'm very much mistaken, is my son.
ANDY: There you go, George. Go to the top of the class.
POLLY: Andy!
ENID: Come give me a kiss, dear. Mmm. Isn't his hair lovely. Lovely. Mmm.
POLLY: Wash your hands, love, we're all ready.
ENID: How lovely. Where've you been, dear?
ANDY: Been over the park.
BRIAN: Does it matter where we all sit?
(POLLY *indicating places.*)
POLLY: George, Enid, Andy, me, Brian.
ENID: How lovely, we're all together.
POLLY: And Geoff.
(GEOFF *comes slowly to the table as the curtain comes down.*
END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO
(GEORGE *and* POLLY *are getting ready to go out.* GEOFF *is busy putting yet more shelves up in the kitchen.* POLLY *is ironing her skirt for the function, or sewing something into her dress.* GEORGE *is in a dress shirt. It is evening and the children, as ever, are in bed.*)
GEORGE: Put my cuff-links in will you?
POLLY: Geoff'll do it. I've still got to get washed.
(GEORGE *goes over to* GEOFF.)
GEORGE: (*to* POLLY) You're going to have to get a move on. (*To* GEOFF) Are you baby sitting?
GEOFF: Me? No. You're dropping me off, aren't you? (*To* POLLY.)
POLLY: Andy's sitting. I asked him this morning.
GEORGE: (*edging over to table where his watch is, so that* GEOFF

has to follow him still trying to put in his links) Does he know what time we've got to be there?

POLLY: Don't get all agitato.

GEORGE: What time have we got to be there? Thank you.

GEOFF: (*looking at card in mirror*) Eight.

POLLY: Eight for anything or just eight?

GEOFF: Eight.

POLLY: That means eight fifteen.

GEORGE: It means eight. It isn't as if we were just going out to Enid or somebody.

POLLY: Better start ringing a taxi.

GEORGE: The car should have been back today.

POLLY: I don't know why we bother with the garage. Geoff is marvellous with engines.

GEORGE: (*telephoning*) There ought to be somewhere to go to get not only service for the car but also absolution for the sin of owning it.

POLLY: Sin. I don't know what we'd do without it.

GEORGE: What I would like is the bare essentials, a car like a monastic cell swept clean of dangling dolls, jokey notices, scatter cushions and . . . Hello. I want a taxi please to . . . Ah you're not 3232. I did dial it. Sorry you've been troubled. Goodbye, madam. A car shot of all the paraphernalia of dedicated motoring. What I want is an Austin Ascetic, a Morris Monk or a Triumph Trappist. Good evening. Could we have a taxi please in about . . . how long?

POLLY: Three quarters of an hour.

GEORGE: Half an hour. 17 Passfield Gardens, Highgate. The name is Oliver.

POLLY: Say MP. It always helps.

GEORGE: MP. I wasn't giving you my initials. Never mind. The number is Dickens 0310. Dickens of Oliver Twist fame. DIC is the *same* as the code. I know the Post Office is asking us to use all figure numbers. But I am ringing up for a taxi, not for the latest developments in telecommunications.

POLLY: We'll never get one if you're rude to them. For God's sake, be NICE.

GEORGE: The Dickens number is 432 . . . I mean 342 . . . 0310. Yes, I will hold on. Geoff, hold on for me, will you.

POLLY: I wish it wasn't tonight. We shall miss you on the telly.

GEORGE: It's old stock most of it. (*Picking up some ornament.*) Where's this thing from?

POLLY: It's a present.

GEORGE: Who the hell from?

POLLY: . . . from Geoff.

GEORGE: Oh, sorry.

(POLLY *winks at* GEOFF *behind* GEORGE*'s back.* GEORGE *does his shirt up in front of the mirror and puts on his tie—he has cut himelf shaving also.*)

POLLY: Watch the iron for me, love, will you.

(GEOFF, *with the receiver to his ear, is now watching the iron also.*)

GEORGE: I think I've broken off my tooth again. (*He examines his mouth in the mirror.*) My mouth is beginning to look like the ruins of Hamburg.

POLLY: I can't understand you having such bad teeth. Mine are perfect.

GEOFF: It's through not having oranges in the war.

POLLY: Why is it only teeth that decay?

GEORGE: It isn't.

POLLY: You don't always have to go to the doctor's to have holes in your arms stopped up, do you. Or your legs filled. It's a flaw in the design.

GEORGE: That's one thing I envy . . . no resent . . . in Andy. For all the fact he was brought up on an exclusive diet of baked beans and licorice allsorts he has perfectly even teeth. Whereas mine are as yellow and pitted as a pub lavatory. I open my mouth and there's so much gold it's like a glimpse of the vaults at Fort Knox.

GEOFF: Hold on. (*Hands receiver to* GEORGE.)

GEORGE: Yes. Yes. What? Nearer the time. (*To* POLLY.) They want us to ring nearer the time.

POLLY: But it is nearer the time.

GEORGE: (*to receiver*) But it is nearer the time. Nearer still. You're sure there'll be one. Yes, yes. Goodbye.

(*The children start making a din upstairs.* GEORGE *goes to the stairs door and halfway up the stairs.*)

GEORGE: James. You shouldn't be out of bed. Go back to bed. What? What does she say, James? No, she can't have her pram in bed. She's brushed her teeth.

POLLY: Oh yes, she can.

GEORGE: James. You can tell Elizabeth that decision has now been countermanded on higher authority. She can have her pram in bed. Oh God. Trouble with children . . . they're so childish. If only they were older.

POLLY: They'll get older . . . in time.

(POLLY *takes off her blouse and puts on the one she's been ironing.*)

Be a love, Geoff, and tell them a story.

(GEOFF *goes upstairs.*)

GEORGE: You ought to be a bit more careful, undressing in front of Geoff. You embarrass him.

POLLY: He doesn't mind.

GEORGE: He'll think you're doing it on purpose.

POLLY: You said it embarrasses him. You mean it embarrasses you. You forget I was brought up a member of the middle classes. We are not embarrassed by our bodies.

GEORGE: You are thirty-two. You are rapidly approaching the age when your body, whether it embarrasses you or not, begins to embarrass other people.

POLLY: Speak for yourself.

GEORGE: I do not fart about the house in my underpants.

POLLY: I've seen you in your underpants.

GEORGE: Of course you've seen me in my underpants. You are my wife. Seeing me in my underpants is part of the duties, responsibilities and possibly even the pleasures of marriage. All I am saying is that I do not fart about in the house in them. You have never seen me in this room for instance in my underpants.

(POLLY *thinks very hard.*)

POLLY: (*triumphantly*) Yes, I have.

GEORGE: When?

(POLLY *crestfallen. She can't remember.*)

We ought to be making tracks.

POLLY: No. I know I have.

GEORGE: I'm sorry we're late Prime Minister, but my wife and I were detained in argument, as to when was the last occasion she saw me in the living room in my underpants.

POLLY: And saying that about his present.

GEORGE: I didn't know it was his. Be honest, you don't like it . . .

POLLY: No, but, I'm trying to encourage him. Educate him a bit.

GEORGE: What in? The liberal art of accumulating unwanted scrap? I suppose you think by teaching him to line his nice little Notting Hill nest with articles like that is education.

POLLY: It's a kind of education. It's better than nothing.

GEORGE: It's corruption. He'd be better off with the usual fifteen Penguins and a blow-up of Buster Keaton.

(GEORGE *is by now more or less kitted out. He puts on his jacket and regards himself in the mirror.*)

I wish I was a bit more left wing. Then I needn't wear this thing on grounds of conscience.

POLLY: You look very good. Really slim.

(*Pause.*)

POLLY: You aren't going in those socks.

GEORGE: What socks? I haven't got any others.

POLLY: You can't go to Downing Street in grey socks. What if somebody looks up your legs?

GEORGE: As I'm swinging from the chandelier, you mean. If one remembers that the Lord Chancellor wears button boots and football socks, I reckon these are pretty discreet.

POLLY: I wonder what colour Geoff's socks are.

(*She makes for the stairs door.*)

GEORGE: I am not wearing Geoff's socks.

POLLY: Here. I know.

(*She goes to a drawer and takes out a pair of worn black tights.*)

I knew these would come in.

(*She starts cutting off the legs, about half-way up.*)

GEORGE: I can't wear those. They're yours. They won't fit me.

POLLY: They stretch, stupid.

GEORGE: Anyway, they're very hot to the feet. I shall sweat.

POLLY: You're a Socialist. They expect you to sweat.

GEORGE: 'I wonder whether you'd be interested to know, Prime Minister, that beneath this suave Geraldo-like exterior, I am

wearing a pair of ladies' black tights?' 'Really? This is something that transcends politics. Tell me more.' I'll feel easier when Andy turns up.

POLLY: He's generally very reliable.

GEORGE: Probably servicing some sixteen-year-old classmate with more abortions than O levels.

(GEORGE *picks up the telephone to ring a taxi again.*)

GEORGE: He's on the phone. Andy, where are you? We're stuck here waiting to go out. You're supposed to be at home baby-sitting. What? . . . (*To* POLLY) He is at home. He's upstairs. Sorry. No, no. Carry on. Be my guest. I'm only the subscriber. (*He puts the receiver down, then picks it up again, and listens.*)

POLLY: George!

GEORGE: Ssh! (*After a while putting it down.*) They weren't even talking about me.

POLLY: Why should they be?

GEORGE: I am just curious to know what he is like when I'm not there, that's all. Anyway, I am ready. (*He settles down on the sofa.*) Time for a few apopletic moments with the *Daily Express.*

POLLY: Try that taxi again.

GEORGE: Give it five minutes. Here we are. 'Pru Venables, niece of Rear-Admiral Sir Murdo Venables. Pru . . . here seen showing a larger expanse of upper thigh than her work with mentally handicapped children would seem to warrant, though, you will note, with her parts discreetly veiled in shadow, thinks Mr Heath is super.'

(*He gets the scissors and cuts it out and sticks it with the other cuttings on the wall.*)

POLLY: How's Brian? Did you have lunch yesterday?

GEORGE: I had lunch with him yesterday. Aren't you getting ready?

POLLY: What about?

GEORGE: Just lunch.

POLLY: No more postcards?

GEORGE: Postcards? He didn't say. Forget about it. It's not so extraordinary really. Somebody who's mad. If you ever raise your voice in public you know damn well before you've got two words out there'll be some clown stampeding for the Basildon Bond. 'Any Answers', that's the real voice of the English people. Envious, cruel, angry and complacent. And the *Express.* It's nice to know the enemy's still there.

(ANDY *appears.*)

What ho. By salad cream out of fish fingers, my Birds Eye boy.

ANDY: Light my fire. Is there any food.

(ANDY *kisses* POLLY. *And dashes dandruff off* GEORGE*'s shoulders.*)

GEORGE: Sorry. It must have come off the comb.

ANDY: There you go, George. Smart.

GEORGE: I don't often wear it, it's . . .

ANDY: No. No. It suits you.

POLLY: Doesn't it?

ANDY: It's you, Dad. Very fetching. Quite the Young Conservative.

GEORGE: What's happening about school, said he, shifting smartly to the offensive.

POLLY: Not now, George, there isn't time.

GEORGE: You're the one who hasn't got any time. Jillo. Come on. Put your skates on. Have you thought what you want to do yet? I mean, eventually.

ANDY: No.

GEORGE: No.

(*Pause*)

GEORGE: Nothing at all?

ANDY: I'd sort of hoped, you know, I was going to want to become an architect.

GEORGE: Yes.

ANDY: But it doesn't seem to be coming, the urge, so now I think I ought to drift for a bit.

(GEORGE *is silent.*)

I'm easy . . . I . . . you know . . . I . . . don't care.

GEORGE: I know you don't care . . . What I don't see is why you have to care.

ANDY: But look, then say I don't care. Which I don't . . .

GEORGE: Andy, care about what?

ANDY: About the work, you know, what I'm doing, I, you know, well I go along with it, right. I get my A levels, say. I don't care. I get a degree, maybe say . . . I don't care. I get a job. I don't care. I mean, George. When does it happen? When do I start to come into it? Me. Not until I've got this sodding great jingling ring of qualifications to unlock all the doors I'm not particular to go into. So why not stuff it right now? I was trying to see the point of it. And that if I went to University it would be a waste of time. It's three years of my life.

(*Here or elsewhere* POLLY *should interrupt scene, without speaking, by rushing in looking for things, e.g. toilet roll. or searching in cupboards, finding what she wants and going out again.*)

GEORGE: Three years! Look how old are you? Eighteen.

ANDY: Seventeen.

GEORGE: Seventeen. I didn't even get to University till I was twenty two. I was stuck on some deserted aerodrome in the twilight of Empire for two years first. You'll be finished when you're twenty two. And you talk about time. Time is the one thing you have got. If there's one thing I envy you for, it's not your cool and your easy birds and an arse like a split grapefruit, it's time. You've got all the time in the world. You've still got the option. And this time, the drifting, what will you do with it, now that you've got it?

ANDY: Travel, social work. I hadn't thought.

GEORGE: No, I seem to be the only one doing any thinking. What sort of social work?

ANDY: Stop trying to pin me down.

GEORGE: All work is social work if you do it right.

ANDY: He said.

GEORGE: And if society's organised right.

ANDY: But it isn't, is it? You can't see it, because you're involved in the system.

GEORGE: System. The phrases are so worn I wonder you've the face to use them. System. What system? The system that makes me thirty years older than you are. The system of me not being willing, or indeed able to pour myself into a pair of turquoise matador pants and grow ringlets down to my shoulders. The system of clinging to plain hard logical thought instead of being at the whim of vague gusts of feeling and fellowship. Yes I am part of that system.

ANDY: No. It's, like, sharing. You know. Being kind to one another. The system feeds you palliatives. The whole meaning of life is lost.

GEORGE: So. What does it mean? You say we're losing it—you must know what it is.

ANDY: It's not saying that's mine, that's yours. Not caring about colour, race . . .

GEORGE: Do I care about colour?

ANDY: I didn't say you did.

GEORGE: Well then . . .

(POLLY *comes in and out quickly.*)

POLLY: Have you got that taxi?

(GEORGE *goes on with his conversation with* ANDY *as he telephones.*)

ANDY: You see, George, you've only got to read Marx to see . . .

GEORGE: I have only to . . . No. *You* have only got to read Marx. I already have. What do you think I was doing stuck on my bed in the RAF for two years? Anyway, where've you been doing Marx?

ANDY: We do it in Religious Instruction.

GEORGE: Ah.

ANDY: Dave says . . .

GEORGE: *Who* says?

ANDY: Dave. He's taking us for teaching practice.

GEORGE: Dave. Dave.

ANDY: He says . . .

GEORGE: There's no need to tell me what Dave says. I know what the Daves of this world say.

ANDY: But you don't, George. You never listen. It's just your dissillusion. You lump people together, goodies and baddies. You don't differentiate between . . .

(GEORGE *holds up his hand to stop him.*)

GEORGE: Hallo. I want a taxi to 17 Passfield Gardens, Highgate. Yes . . . yes I did ring before if you remem . . . My number is Dick . . . sorry 342 0310. Yes . . . yes . . . I'll hold on . . . Love is all you need. That's your philosophy, isn't it. Come to me at forty trailing your wife and kids and your whole communal family when any number of joints won't disguise the fact you're fat and cross and tired and tell me then that love is all you need. Try getting that together. Yes . . . yes . . . Passfield Gardens.

ANDY: George. I have said, you know, nothing.

GEORGE: That's 'you know' right. You have said 'you know' bugger all. Love is not all you need.

ANDY: I never said it was.

GEORGE: No. That's how subtle you are. But you bloody well think it.
ANDY: I've said nothing. I've made no charges. What I think you don't know. You've not the faintest idea. You're not even interested. It's shadow boxing.
GEORGE: Knowledge and subtlety and understanding and law . . . I am holding on, Madam, like grim death . . . law that's what you need. Grubbing away on committees and nagging at officials and teasing away at the law; taking it in and letting it out until it fits even approximately the people who have to wear it.
ANDY: And talk, George. You forget talk. Lots and lots of talk. Witty talk. Clever talk. Dirty talk. Parliamentary talk. You're a killer, Dad, you really are.
GEORGE: Listen. Shocking though it may seem to your mawkish Maoist mentality ninety nine per cent of the people in this world are thick. Stupid.
ANDY: Who, Dad? You, me? Not you, me. The others.
GEORGE: That's right. The others. People who with pushing and planning, welfare and incentives can just about be brought to see their own nose end . . . And by that nose end they are led. By me. And in due course by you.
ANDY: You're wrong, George. You are wrong. Look, each person is special . . .
GEORGE: Special. On the Kingston By Pass on a Sunday afternoon show me how special.
ANDY: Not if you like them . . . if you try and . . .
GEORGE: Liking them doesn't feed them, and liking doesn't house them. Liking them doesn't stop them turning the place into a midden or turning out in their stinking, fuming tin boxes. Sunday by Sunday perambulating their boredom about the countryside. (*Pause*)
GEORGE: So what are you going to do?
ANDY: I've told you. I don't know.
GEORGE: Of course you could go into Oxfam, or War on Want. The amount of stuff we contribute they're practically family firms. I don't know. Andy. Andy. The only thing that matters in life is work. W-O-R-K.
ANDY: Come on.
GEORGE: No.
ANDY: Look, I *believe* you . . .
GEORGE: No, really. I tell you there are times when family and kids are . . . yes, I am holding . . . all the things that are supposed to make life worth living are marginal and nothing compared with work.
ANDY: But . . .
GEORGE: No, wait.
ANDY: Work. You talk about work. Parliament? You? You never stop sounding off about it . . . threatening to go back to Oxford.
GEORGE: I know, I know . . .
ANDY: The worst thing you ever did, you said, what dregs there are in it. Come on. I reckon it's pretty irrelevant nowadays. Esso, ICI, Shell. That's where the power is. The Conglomerates.
GEORGE: The what?
ANDY: The Conglomerates . . . Esso, ICI, Shell . . .
GEORGE: The Conglomerates. I bet that's Dave!
ANDY: Well what did parliament ever do. It never did much for me anyway.
GEORGE: It never did much for you . . . it brought you into the bloody world. You were born in 1953 in Charing Cross Hospital under the auspices of the National Health Service. The National Health Service, a phrase still capable of bringing a sly smile to people's faces. You shrug it off, the Welfare State, another sneering phrase. It's nothing to you. You've grown up with it, you were born under it. You take it for granted now. You don't remember the years when it was put together, at the desks of little men with bad teeth and terrible haircuts, runtish little civil servants born during the Depression, smoking too much in their cold government green offices in Nissen huts on bomb sites shivering through that winter of 1947 that went on until June. Hammering it out clause by clause, section by irrelevant section. Food rationed, clothes rationed, coal rationed, working by candle light in power cuts, left standing in the Tube by the hour together. Battering it out and forcing it through in the teeth of the Conservative Party, in the teeth of the medical profession, in the rotten nicotine stained teeth of half the nation, they got it through and laid the corner stone of a civilised life. And I glory in that. Snobbish, sceptical sneering socialist that I am, I glory in it.
ANDY: Great days, Dad. Those were the days, Dad.
GEORGE: Socialist that I am I glory in it. And it was done, please note, not by kindness and benevolence, not by moist good fellowship and rattling beads and tuning into the universe. But by grit and thought and work. Back breaking, life destroying ill tempered work . . . Work that comes out of guilt and fear and want and all those phantoms your generation is very happy to be without. And you sit there with your stupid transcendental grin on your face and say it's irrelevant.
ANDY: Save it, Dad. Save it for some other stupid sod. One of the ninety nine percent. No point in wasting it on me. I'm one of the chosen. That's right, isn't it? Anyway it's all relative.
GEORGE: What?
ANDY: It's all relative.
GEORGE: Which particular revolutionary handbook did you pick that one up from? Or is that Dave? It isn't all relative. Some things are absolute. Humbug is absolute. Rubbish is absolute. Sloppy sentimental and worthless. And waste. And it is a bloody waste. You'll end up like our friend, upstairs stripping wardrobes for a living. (*To receiver*) What, yes. But I've been holding on for the last ten minutes. I *did* ring earlier. Half an hour ago. What? How do you mean too late? When I rang before you said it was too early. Now you say it's too late. How do . . . well whose fault is it? Of course it's your fault. Oh . . . get stuffed. (GEORGE*'s indignation is spread between the operator and* ANDY.) Words fail me. They always do in the end. Worst method of communicating with anybody. Sorry.
ANDY: Come on, Dad, we have a laugh, don't we?
GEORGE: (*shouting upstairs*) There's no taxi. I'll go and try and catch one down the road. Be ready.
(POLLY *comes down almost at the same moment as* GEORGE *is putting on his coat.*)
(*to* ANDY) Sorry.
POLLY: What was that?
ANDY: The Oxford English Dictionary triumphs again.
(GEOFF *comes downstairs.* ANDY *goes upstairs.* POLLY *is all dressed up, ready.*)
POLLY: Nice?
GEOFF: Very nice.
POLLY: Can you do this?
(GEOFF *begins to fasten her ear-rings on,* ANDY *returns for some milk.*)
ANDY: Excuse me. Sorry to interrupt.
POLLY: He's only doing my ear-rings, love.
GEOFF: He know?
POLLY: No. Anyway. No. He's been having a set-to with George. Where are you off to tonight?
GEOFF: Nowhere.
POLLY: Nowhere?
GEOFF: No.
POLLY: You could stop here and watch George on the telly if you wanted.
GEOFF: No. Is Brian going to this thing tonight?
POLLY: Who?
GEOFF: Brian.
POLLY: I suppose so. It's a duty do. MP's and their ladies. You call him Brian?
(POLLY *should embark on some job at this point entirely out of keeping with her get up. Dusting or cleaning up or polishing.*)
GEOFF: Why not?
POLLY: What does he call you?
GEOFF: Doesn't call me anything.
POLLY: Do you think he fancies you?
GEOFF: Have you seen the chuck? (*He is clearing up his tools.*)
POLLY: The what?
GEOFF: For the drill.
POLLY: He probably does. What does it look like?
POLLY: Have you ever been in bed with a man?
GEOFF: Come on. Everybody has some time or other.
POLLY: Have they? James had it somewhere this morning. George hasn't.
GEOFF: Not bed, but at school. As a kid. Something, there must have been.
POLLY: What I said, but he says not. That's his generation for you. Things used to be different. More fraught. Is this it?
GEOFF: And now he's too old to start. Lend us that. I'll sweep up.

POLLY: But you can tell Brian fancies you, the way he never talks to you.
GEOFF: You'll get all mucky.
POLLY: Don't you think so?
GEOFF: Maybe, maybe. And if he does, then?
POLLY: Nothing. Do you know when someone fancies you?
GEOFF: You tell me.
POLLY: You told me.
GEOFF: What're you after?
POLLY: Nothing. Just interested. Has he touched you? Brian. He's very well off.
GEOFF: Do me a favour. Ask him, why don't you? If you're so keen. Get it all mapped out. I'm only part time here, you know.
POLLY: Sorry. Well stop fiddling about and talk to me.
(*He is about to kiss her, when the taxi hoots outside and* GEORGE *is heard coming in.*)
GEORGE: Come on. Geoff, we'll have to drop you at Oxford Circus, there's not time to go your way.
(*He opens the stairs door and shouts, only* ANDY *is either just coming down or has been behind the door all the time.*)
We're going now. I don't know what time we'll be back. Damn. I never rang Enid. She was going to the hospital today.
POLLY: There isn't time now, love. Switch the programme on, you're missing it. And make sure James does a pee. Your supper's in the oven.
(*They go.* ANDY *switches on the set. He gets something from the fridge. Cake, or a mixture of unsuitable food which he puts beside him on the sofa without a plate. The television warms up. He tries several channels before* GEORGE *appears.*)
GEORGE (TV): Somehow society ought always to be kept open. There must be a choice. Until you give people a choice there will always be people going up society by the wrong ladders . . . sex, fashion, crime.
VOICE (TV): But you say there must be options. What I don't understand is what changes you would make in the State System as it exists today.
GEORGE (TV): Look I am a product of the State System and admirable though it may be in some respects in others it is appalling.
VOICE (TV): Appalling.
GEORGE (TV): But it isn't education simply. You see, I believe that some people are better than others, better not because they're cleverer or more cultivated or God knows . . . (*he laughs*) because they're better off. But because they're more . . . more human. I used to believe that the relation between such people and education was one of cause and effect . . .
(ANDY *who has been watching it for a long time with his hand on the switch either switches it off or switches it over. He takes a long swig from the milk bottle and switches it off altogether as the lights fade briefly, and go up again on* GEORGE, BRIAN *and* POLLY *sat round the kitchen table.*)
GEORGE: It's autumn. Autumn. The start of term. The real beginning of the year. I've always kept terms, ever since I was five years old. Autumn when you moved up a class, changed teachers, got a new exercise book. New satchel, school socks. I even went into the army in September. And Oxford in October, trunks in the lodge, leaves down Parks Road. Track suits. And now Parliament again. Still in terms. There are people whose year begins with the Calendar. Begins, as Fleet Street decrees it should begin with travel brochures and sales in Oxford Street. How many? Most people, I suppose. Wish class away there would still be this: we are two nations because our years have different bones. Terms are part of the crumbling skeleton of the Christian Year. Advent, annunciation, birth, passion and pentecost. Our year begins as theirs dies. Theirs . . . whose? The masses. The people. The voters. I was in America a year on a scholarship. After Oxford. There were no terms there. It was time with the stays taken out of it, no rhythm to the calendar, no Christian holidays, no Easter or Whitsuntide. A secular state. There were sudden holidays in the middle of nowhere. Like missing a step on a stair. Lincoln's birthday. Labour Day. Odd, capricious, unexpected. No system. No scheme. I like system. I like ceremony. I like pattern.
(*The lights go up as he addresses these last remarks to* POLLY *and* BRIAN.)
Perhaps I am a Christian. Perhaps that's what's wrong with me. Or boredom.
POLLY: If you're so bored you could put the milk bottles out.
BRIAN: Boredom at least implies there's something better.
(GEORGE *does put the milk bottles out.* POLLY *is referring to a printed list, getting together some clothes. She holds up a little pink blazer.*)
POLLY: Look at his little jacket. Doesn't it look pretty.
GEORGE: How much is this Greyfriars Trousseau going to cost?
POLLY: Nothing. It's coming out of Aunt Betty's money.
(GEORGE *fingers a waspish football jersey.*)
GEORGE: I particularly resent money spent on kitting him out for competitive games.
POLLY: All games are competitive.
GEORGE: How's he going to get to the flaming school, with the streets thick with sex maniacs.
POLLY: They have a rota. I've got into a group. It's Thursdays our day.
GEORGE: Thus dragging us willy nilly into association with all the other educational queue jumpers. If there's one thing I don't fancy at nine o'clock in the morning it's chauffeuring round a cartload of Jason's and Jeremy's.
POLLY: Half past eight.
GEORGE: Cash name tapes. They were always great dividers. Like three initials. What's this?
POLLY: His hair.
GEORGE: All this?
POLLY: It says they prefer it short.
GEORGE: Short? (*He runs upstairs.*) It's not a flaming monastery.
POLLY: You all right, love.
(BRIAN *nods.*)
It's all show is this. Andy's the one. Now he's back at school what does it matter?
BRIAN: He *is* back.
POLLY: Never left. It was all talk. In this house it generally is. *He* likes it. You have to take it all with a piece of cake.
GEORGE: He looks like a little lavatory brush. I wonder are there any other alterations to the fabric the school requires. Eyelashes clipped to regulation length? Circumcision perhaps?
POLLY: If he doesn't mind, I don't.
BRIAN: Anyway all games are not competitive.
POLLY: All competitive games are.
GEORGE: Yes. I suppose now we've seen him safely into the escalator you'll start worrying about Elizabeth. Already at five more eccentric than Edith Sitwell ever was. I wonder whether there's a handily situated atheist convent.
POLLY: I shouldn't worry. She'll probably slump into marriage same way as I did. I was a bright girl, you know.
GEORGE: You were not a bright girl. You talked like a man and you smoked cigars. That is not intellect.
POLLY: I was brighter than anybody else in my year.
GEORGE: And where are they now, your year. Gossip columnists on the *Evening Standard,* publishers readers, hostesses on late night television programmes. The commanding heights of the economy. You're well out of it.
POLLY: I ought to say at this juncture that since I didn't manage to get to Sainsbury's there is nothing for supper.
GEORGE: Eggs?
POLLY: No.
GEORGE: Can't you raid the store cupboard?
POLLY: Yes, if you fancy gooseberries on toast. Couldn't we go out?
GEORGE: No sitters. Incidentally Geoff rang when you were out.
POLLY: Geoff. What about?
GEORGE: Nothing much. Talk. He hasn't been round for a bit, has he? I've not seen him anyway.
POLLY: If you can think of anything else for him to do. I can't.
GEORGE: I'd just got used to him. I quite like him. He said he might come round.
POLLY: Here? When?
GEORGE: Any time. To-night, I suppose.
POLLY: What time?
GEORGE: Didn't say. Doesn't matter, we're not going out.
POLLY: I was just thinking, could we not go out? To eat.
GEORGE: How can we? Why do you suddenly want to go out anyway? There'll be enough meals out starting tomorrow. Why do we have to eat at all? Couldn't we just give it a miss?
POLLY: I suppose you're bored with eating now?
GEORGE: Yes. In at one end of the tunnel and out the other.

POLLY: Shall we go out or shan't we?
BRIAN: No, come on. We'll have enough going out starting tomorrow.
POLLY: I didn't have any lunch. We haven't been out for ages.
(*Pause*)
GEORGE: No. Look. Why don't I go out to the Koh-I-Noor and fetch some? Then you won't have to do anything.
POLLY: It's not that . . . all right.
(GEORGE *goes out.*)
POLLY: Oh God. Why is it always me that gets the tap end of the bath?
(POLLY *puts the oven on.* BRIAN *says nothing.*)
POLLY: Have *you* seen Geoff?
BRIAN: Have I seen him?
POLLY: You do see him, don't you?
BRIAN: Yes. Sometimes.
POLLY: Sometimes. I wondered whether that was what you were glum about.
BRIAN: No. Oh no.
POLLY: Because he's going away. Did you know that?
BRIAN: Yes.
POLLY: Do you know where?
BRIAN: Yes.
POLLY: Where?
BRIAN: Torremolinos.
POLLY: What to do?
BRIAN: He has this friend who's opening a restaurant.
POLLY: Another friend. So. There we are.
BRIAN: What? Oh. Yes.
POLLY: Don't you want to know how I found out?
BRIAN: Found out what?
POLLY: You and Geoff.
BRIAN: It wasn't that much of a secret.
POLLY: You never told me.
BRIAN: No, I suppose not.
POLLY: He started wearing your after shave lotion.
BRIAN: You can buy it in shops. I don't have it specially blended.
POLLY: That and . . . vibes.
BRIAN: Vibes.
POLLY: You can tell you knew each other better than you let on.
BRIAN: Not much better. He's still a bit of a mystery to me.
POLLY: So in the end I asked him point blank. And he told me.
BRIAN: Yes. He told me he told you. He may be coming round later on to collect his stuff.
POLLY: He didn't tell me.
BRIAN: He told me about you.
POLLY: He didn't tell me about you. Why is that, I wonder?
BRIAN: He knew I wouldn't mind. In my situation one can't really afford to. I was . . . a bit shocked about you.
POLLY: Shocked. You were shocked? What had you to be shocked about?
BRIAN: Polly, you are married.
POLLY: Yes. But I loved him.
(*Pause*)
No, I didn't. Did you?
BRIAN: No.
POLLY: Did he love you?
BRIAN: Oh no. He obliges, but he's not that way anyway.
POLLY: But it's a good job I didn't love him. Otherwise I should have been a bit, you know, cross.
BRIAN: Cross. What a funny word.
POLLY: I should have had a right to be cross.
BRIAN: It's like a French farce. I go out one door, you come in at the other.
POLLY: I suppose this is what's meant by talking it over like grown up people, ie neither of us could care a damn.
BRIAN: I care. He wasn't in love with you, though?
POLLY: No. What did he talk about to you?
BRIAN: Questions mainly. Lots of questions.
POLLY: What about?
BRIAN: Anything. What did I think of President Kennedy. Had there been a plot. Would there be another war. Had I ever spoken to the Prime Minister.
POLLY: Yes, that's it. That's like it was with me.
BRIAN: And looking for a way in, somehow. As if it were all to do with being clued up. Question and answer, but not to any purpose.
POLLY: And you can't put him off, can you. He gets moody. I know I wasn't much help. I got a bit bored.
BRIAN: I wasn't bored. I felt . . . a bit sorry for him.
POLLY: I didn't.
BRIAN: You're not coming out of this very well.
POLLY: Did you smoke with him?
BRIAN: I don't smoke. Oh *smoke*. No. No. He asked me. I wouldn't.
POLLY: I did.
BRIAN: Nice?
POLLY: No. Made it less boring. I was sick once. Just like having a baby. Course I've seen more of him than you. Perhaps you'd have got bored. Except that was what I wanted really, a good boring man. George is so interesting all the time it gets boring. Whereas having a boring man was rather interesting.
BRIAN: I don't think you were all that well suited.
POLLY: What about . . . sex?
BRIAN: It was actually quite a bit before we got onto sex.
POLLY: Do you know, I found that. I think these days it seems to come quite low down on the list. There's a good deal of . . . I don't know . . . well just cuddles.
BRIAN: Yes.
POLLY: I find that a bit disturbing.
BRIAN: Do you? It's what they like. It's one of the differences nowadays. I've noticed it before.
POLLY: Why don't they get on with it, do you think?
BRIAN: They . . . are . . . the young . . . him, Andy . . . nicer than we were, I reckon. I think things are different. Drifting, not pushing. Accepting.
POLLY: You?
BRIAN: Me, I suppose. Things in general. Not . . . not scoring. And it's not pot. It's them. And it's admirable. I wish it were me.
POLLY: He said I was very warm. Didn't he say that to you?
BRIAN: No. He said . . . no. He didn't say that.
POLLY: I suppose I am rather warm, really. George says I'm warm. You never know, do you?
BRIAN: What?
POLLY: You do, I suppose. But what you're like. Until there's been someone else, and there never was, you see—so I didn't know I was warm . . . anything . . . I thought that was just George. But now there's been someone else, I suppose, I must be. And you find you're something else besides. Someone else he, George, doesn't know, and now I've got to go back to being just what I was. And it's going to be so . . . (*she is crying*) boring.
(ANDY *is heard coming down the stairs and* POLLY *quickly switches on her transistor.*)
ANDY: What's up?
POLLY: (*Above the music, which is very loud and martial, say Sousa*) Nothing love. (*She blows her nose*) I'm just affected by the music.
ANDY: Is it George?
POLLY: Dad? No. Honestly. Is it, Brian?
BRIAN: No. We were just having a jolly good cry together. It's our age, you know.
ANDY: What's happened to all the food?
POLLY: George has just gone out for something. Look in the store cupboard if there's anything you fancy.
(ANDY *looks and comes out with a bottle of gooseberries: which he opens and begins spooning them out, occasionally drinking the juice from the bottle.*)
ANDY: You're sure you're all right?
POLLY: Positive. Honestly.
(*They sit in awkward silence for a bit while* ANDY *spoons in the gooseberries, and they watch him.*)
ANDY: Good these are.
POLLY: Good. They're last year's. This year they were nothing at all. (*To* BRIAN) Nothing at all.
BRIAN: Were they?
POLLY: Nothing. Green fly.
(*She still sniffs silently.*)
ANDY: (*to* BRIAN) Do you want any?
BRIAN: No. I . . . No.
(*Knock at the door.*)
POLLY: (*leaping up*) That'll be Geoff.
(*She runs very quickly upstairs.* ANDY *shrugs and answers the door.*)
GEOFF: How do.

ANDY: She's upstairs. You know Brian?
(GEOFF *raises hand to* BRIAN.)
GEOFF: I called round to collect the rest of my gear.
ANDY: (*through stairs door*) Mum. Geoff. Do you know where it all is?
GEOFF: More or less.
(ANDY *sits down again, goes on with the gooseberries. The silence is still pretty awkward.*)
ANDY: Gooseberry?
GEOFF: What?
ANDY: Home made. (*Holding the bottle.*)
GEOFF: No, thanks. No, OK, I will. (*He tries one.*) You seen my set square?
ANDY: In James' box, try.
(GEORGE *now appears with two carriers and several silver foil cartons of Indian food, which he dumps on the kitchen table.*)
GEORGE: Hello, stranger. We were just saying you'd not been round. You staying for supper?
GEOFF: No.
GEORGE: Indian food. There's always plenty.
ANDY: Except for the Indians.
GEOFF: I'll see to it, shall I.
GEORGE: Would you?
(GEOFF *puts food in oven, etc.*)
Drink? (*To Brian*) No? No.
(GEOFF *has now got most of his gear together.*)
Are you going?
GEOFF: Yes.
BRIAN: To Spain.
GEORGE: Spain?
GEOFF: I'd borrowed one or two books. I don't know where they go.
GEORGE: Take some more if you want.
GEOFF: I'd better not. It'll be a bit before I'm back.
GEORGE: Whereabouts?
GEOFF: Torremolinos . . . I'm going to help set up this restaurant.
GEORGE: Torremolinos?
GEOFF: Yeah. It's good-bye to The Smoke. Anywhere.
(GEOFF *is putting the books back on the shelf.*)
GEORGE: Take some. It's not exactly Wittenberg, Torremolinos.
GEOFF: What? I can never follow you.
ANDY: It wouldn't suit him so he can't see why it should suit you either.
GEORGE: I just don't think Torremolinos Public Library will be much cop.
ANDY: I envy you. I wish it were me.
GEOFF: I don't know what to choose.
ANDY: Here. I'll choose some.
GEOFF: (*To* ANDY) I had a tape measure. Have you seen it . . .
GEORGE: It's on the sink. I shouldn't worry about books, Geoff. Books are on their way out, nowadays, didn't you know that. Words are on their last legs. Words, print and also thought. That's also for the high jump. The sentence, that dignified entity with subject and predicate, is shortly to be made illegal. It probably already is in Torremolinos. Wherever two or three words are gathered together, you see, there is a grave danger that thought might be present. All assemblies of words will be forbidden, in favour of patterns of light, videotape, every man his own telecine. Oh, and vibes. Yes, vibes. Does she know you're here?
GEOFF: A lot of the time I never understand what you're saying.
(GEORGE *goes upstairs for* POLLY.)
ANDY: You're not missing much. Mum.
GEORGE: You'll wake the kids. I'll get her.
(POLLY *comes downstairs.*)
POLLY: You're going then.
GEOFF: Yes.
POLLY: Is there anything you want?
GEOFF: No.
ANDY: Cheers.
POLLY: Where you going?
ANDY: Only out.
(*Goes out by outside door.* ANDY *should sense he is spare before going.* GEOFF *is left with* BRIAN *and* POLLY.)
GEOFF: Well, I'm off.
POLLY: Oh, are you off?
GEOFF: Yes, I'd better. Not mad, are you?
BRIAN: Me? No.
POLLY: No.
GEOFF: My fault really.
POLLY: You don't want a cup of tea?
GEOFF: No. Something I wanted to say. It . . . it wasn't sex. I mean, it was. I wasn't after anything, but it's the least part of it. Nobody ever explains to you how the system works, what the timetable is, sort of. There ought to have been somebody when I was . . . I don't know . . . somebody to say 'Look this is the last bus. If you're not on this one you're going to have to walk.'
(POLLY *remembers something he has left and is about to give it to him.*)
No. Have that. We're free-loaders, people like me. Hitch-hiking. Whereas you . . . all you . . . you're on the motorway. We're other routes. We're . . . we're lumbered.
(GEOFF *goes, leaving* POLLY *and* BRIAN *rather lost.* GEORGE *comes back.*)
GEORGE: Geoff gone?
POLLY: Mmm.
GEORGE: I wanted to say goodbye. I shall miss him, you know. I'd got quite to like him. Wasted, you know a boy like that. Wasted. He was quite bright. He's somebody in the dustbin. Torremolinos.
POLLY: He'll be all right. He's beautiful. He won't be in the dustbin for long. He's got his head screwed on right.
GEORGE: No. You don't see it, Polly. You think because he's pretty and knows a Chesterfield when he sees it that he's got a pretty nice life. But I tell you, it's waste. It's like Dickens. Fortunes in the dust heap. How do we cast the net wider or make it with a finer mesh. Or are nets what we want? Somehow you see society's got to be kept open. We can't afford to lose people. Somehow boys like that . . .
POLLY: Shut up.
GEORGE: What?
POLLY: One thing about Geoff.
GEORGE: Why?
POLLY: Just for once, let it pass. Shut up. No comment. You always have to fetch everything down to words.
GEORGE: What else would you prefer . . . the music programme?
POLLY: Nowhere, there's nowhere safe . . . from words with you. No . . . no secret room, but what you have to be in there like an auctioneer's clerk, cataloguing, describing, relaying, reducing, everything to a collection of objects, sticking labels on them. Lot numbers. And though nothing's been changed, nothing taken away, just listed, catalogued and explained . . . yet it's less. You make it less, George. It's not a place any more.
GEORGE: It just happens that all I was saying was . . . Geoff is a very good example of something . . .
POLLY: He isn't an *example*. That's it. Can't you see? Always this is what it's like. It's as if this or as if that. No. This is what it is. There isn't a gap. You don't have to be describing always. Not for me anyway. Just leave it. Don't say it. (*She is crying*) All your talk, and you see less than anybody else. You can't even see what's under your nose.
GEORGE: Like what?
POLLY: Like . . . Oh Georgie . . . I don't know . . . like what people are . . . I don't know . . . like.
GEORGE: Like?
POLLY: You're the dead one, George. Irony, litotes, zeugma . . . that's all you are. Just a figure of speech.
(BRIAN *gets up.*)
GEORGE: Don't go, please.
BRIAN: No actually I'd better go.
GEORGE: (*to* POLLY) Look. What is all this about? What am I supposed to have done?
POLLY: Nothing. Nothing.
GEORGE: Nothing. Right. (*as if that settles it*) And what about you?
BRIAN: Me?
GEORGE: You're not exactly Nancy with the Laughing Face. Will one of you tell me what I'm supposed to have done?
BRIAN: You? You've done nothing. Look. There is something I . . . well I ought to explain before tomorrow. Remember those postcards?
GEORGE: Ignore them . . . it's . . . forget about them . . .

BRIAN: No. Something else has happened since then.
ENID'S VOICE: Hello!
(BRIAN *gets up hurriedly.*)
POLLY: Oh Christ. That's all it wanted. No, stay.
BRIAN: No, I'll nip out . . .
(ENID *puts her head round the door.*)
ENID: Coming, hiddy or not.
GEORGE: Now then.
ENID: Cheer up, dear. I'm not stopping. I've got a taxi waiting.
POLLY: Taxi? Where to?
ENID: Stanmore, where else?
POLLY: That'll cost the earth.
ENID: No. It won't you see, because . . .
GEORGE: What's happened about your tests?
ENID: That's what I called in to say. I've been living in fear and trembling and eventually screwed up my courage to the sticking point—Hello, Mr Thing, didn't see you there—went to see dirty Doctor Proctor who of course has had the results for a week and never bothered to tell me.
GEORGE: And what is it?
ENID: Nothing at all. I'm all right. I said what about the shadow and he said well that's all it was, a shadow, no substance to it all all. (*To* BRIAN) Sorry to visit all this on you.
(BRIAN *should go upstairs.*)
GEORGE: Oh, Enid. (*Kisses her.*)
ENID: I really thought it was the fell sergeant this time. I made my will, everything, and such a weep doing it.
POLLY: Enid, you are a twerp.
ENID: Twerp! I thought it was curtains.
GEORGE: I did.
ENID: Did you? I'm glad you didn't tell me. Anyway all gone. So I went to my class tonight, the first time for three weeks. And Zoë and I went out for a little celebration and the male model who turns out to be a taxi driver in his spare time and not a nancy at all. He says its coming from Leeds. They all talk like that. You all right, dear?
POLLY: Yes. Course I'm all right.
GEORGE: And how do you feel?
ENID: At this moment, dear, a bit tiddly. You all right, dear?
POLLY: Yes.
ENID: I suppose it ought to teach me to mend my ways. But I can't see how. George dear, would you do something for me? Go along to the end and get me some ciggies. It's for Gerry. He's been ever so good.
GEORGE: I've got some here. He could have those.
ENID: No, dear, those aren't the sort he likes.
GEORGE: Well, what sort?
ENID: Oh, any sort. He's not fussy. Off you go before they close.
(POLLY *and* ENID *are alone.*)
ENID: You been crying. dear?
POLLY: No.
ENID: What about?
POLLY: Nothing. I haven't.
ENID: Last time I saw you crying . . .
POLLY: I haven't been.
ENID: . . . was when you were fifteen. Over Michael Fitton.
POLLY: Who?
ENID: Michael Fitton, dear, don't you remember? A funny boy with weak ankles who played the violin and lived in the Drysdales.
POLLY: That's right. With ginger hair.
ENID: He's gone to New Zealand. I saw his mother in McCorquodale's last week. You wouldn't think there'd be openings for violinists in New Zealand, would you? She said they were crying out for them.
POLLY: (*crying*) Oh mum. You are lovely.
ENID: Then there was Roger Mowbray. He stood for the council this year.
POLLY: His . . . his feet used to smell.
ENID: Terrible. Probably still do. He didn't get in anyway. That was a narrow escape too. You were quite smitten with him.
POLLY: I never was.
ENID: Yes you were. You've forgotten, but you were. I remember Leonard saying.
(*Pause.*)
Is it that young man?
POLLY: (*still crying*) Sort of, I suppose. Oh dear. Things altogether really. Things going on. And on. This is the way things are going to be now.
ENID: Blow your nose, dear.
POLLY: The family's complete, we don't want any more . . . If I had another baby I think George would strangle it . . . and then him.
ENID: Who?
POLLY: George . . . George is . . . like he is . . . And this is our hand. It's been dealt and now all there is to do is to play it for, what? Thirty years?
ENID: (*she is smoking*) Thirty years.
POLLY: You don't smoke.
ENID: Oh I do occasionally. Special occasions.
(*Pause.*)
You wonder sometimes how you land up where you do. I look across at Leonard sometimes on a night and think of myself running up the steps of the Slade all those years ago. Only it doesn't seem all those years ago. I thought life was going to be like Brahms, do you know? Instead it's, well it's been Eric Coates. And very nice too. But not Brahms.
POLLY: You and Dad have been very happy I've always thought.
ENID: Oh yes, it's been very happy.
POLLY: I've got so much left. Spare. I suppose I ought to be more like you and further education.
ENID: Going to classes? Oh no, that's not the answer, classes. Don't start on that. I've been to so many classes. Pottery classes, first aid classes, classes in book-binding and the first principles of Economics. Keats. Yoga. Poland . . . Cockpit of Europe. Judaism, an Introduction to Flower Arrangement. Classes in primary schools and scout huts, vestries in the black-out, sat there with my pencil and pad, improving myself, leaving Leonard's supper ready. Making contact, taking up the slack, such an awful lot of stock left to take up somehow. Like a pie, marriage, so much pastry sliced off the dish. Oh no, don't start on that. That's not the answer.
POLLY: Did you have any affairs?
ENID: One or two. At least I suppose that's what they were. You never know, do you? I'm supposed to offer advice, aren't I? Your silly old mother. I'm not much good as Evelyn Home.
POLLY: I'm better for the cry, it's all right.
ENID: People ask you for help and all you do is root about in your own trunk trying to come across something similar.
POLLY: It's all right.
ENID: I wouldn't tell him.
POLLY: No? I wanted to.
ENID: It's like setting him a test. No. Marriage isn't Outward Bound, dear. Keep it to yourself, if he doesn't know.
POLLY: No. He doesn't know.
ENID: Stop talking now. Or I shall get on your nerves.
POLLY: No.
ENID: Yes. The trouble with both of us dear is that we've both been hit with the doolally stick.
GEORGE: (*coming in*) Hit with what?
ENID: The doolally stick. A bit daft, it means, the pair of us, your wife and I.
(*Taxi hoots.*)
That's Gerry. He's taking me all the way back to Stanmore for nothing. He's lovely. Is everything all right?
GEORGE: Champion, champion.
ENID: (*kisses* POLLY) 'Bye dear. I'm afraid you've got your old mother for another few years yet.
POLLY: Enid. (*And for the first time kisses her with genuine affection.*)
(BRIAN *reappears. Taxi hoots.*)
That's Gerry again. So impatient. Toodloo.
GEORGE: That's some good news anyway.
POLLY: Is it?
BRIAN: I wondered . . . Anyway, I'll be off.
GEORGE: What is it, for Christ's sake? I can't see why you worry about it. It is that, isn't it? The postcards.
BRIAN: No. No. That's to say, whoever it is has obviously got a bit tired of the situation. I'm still not certain what I'm going to do. He . . . has sent . . . they must have saved the clipping . . . from the newspaper. And sent it to my agent.
GEORGE: So what's happened?

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BRIAN: Blessington, my agent, is an admirable man, who puts down half a bottle of whisky a day and has two convictions for drunken driving, but otherwise a pillar of society. With three teenage sons. The upshot is he has made some inquiries, and, as he put it, sounded opinion in the constituency and . . . I am not going to be asked to stand again.

GEORGE: But that's monstrous.

POLLY: They can't do that, can they, just chuck you out in between elections?

BRIAN: No. Not now. Not straightaway, not without there being a fuss.

GEORGE: You can sit it out. There's three years at least before they can shift you.

BRIAN: It all depends. I can say, you see, I want to devote more time to business, that's an eminently respectable reason.

GEORGE: The sods. When you consider that there are many members of Parliament, and alas not merely in the Conservative Party, men who have never had a moment of self-doubt in their lives. We don't expel them for greed, for arrogance, for debating the state of the nation in voices that would get them thrown out of a saloon bar, for spending lunchtime in strip clubs or trundling their throbbing pink tools round to little blondes in Victoria What is it in this particular sin?

POLLY: What are you going to do?

BRIAN: If I give up, you mean.

GEORGE: You mustn't give up.

BRIAN: Go back full time to the works, I can. Couldn't do that if there were a hullabaloo, you see. And it's a bit late to strike out.

POLLY: You could always do social work.

BRIAN: What?

POLLY: Some sort of social work.

BRIAN: Me? Can you see it? Expiate my sin stroke crime by picking old men off bomb sites and feeding them tea and wads in some East End church hall. Along with a lot of other damp young men, fugitives from teachers' training colleges, ex-altar boys, schizophrenics going straight and High Church young men who make daring jokes about vestments. The lame ducks. The ones who brought a note. No thank you.

GEORGE: You're going to fight it?

BRIAN: I may do. I may not. I haven't thought it out yet. I only got to know this morning.

GEORGE: It's blackmail.

BRIAN: That's right, it's blackmail. But don't get worked up about it.

GEORGE: Worked up, Christ!

BRIAN: Some people might reckon I'm half a man. But then so are you, George, in a different way. So are all politicians. Come close and you'll see a scar. We've all had an operation. We've been seen to, doctored, like cats. Some essential part of our humanity has been removed. It's not honesty or straightforwardness, or the usual things politicians are supposed to lack. It's a sense of the ridiculous, the bloody pointlessness of it all, that's what they've lost. They think they're important. As if it mattered.

GEORGE: Now. Has he put anything down on paper?

BRIAN: Who?

GEORGE: Your agent.

BRIAN: He wrote me a letter.

GEORGE: Saying what?

BRIAN: Saying what I told you.

GEORGE: Outright? Not just hints or . . .

BRIAN: Hints! He gave the actual date of the newspaper.

GEORGE: Then you've got him. Where is it?

BRIAN: What?

GEORGE: Because if he actually committed himself on paper.

BRIAN: I threw it away.

GEORGE: What? But you only have to show that letter . . .

BRIAN: I don't want to show that letter to anybody.

GEORGE: But there's a principle.

BRIAN: George. Fuck principle. I wasn't going to say anything because I knew we'd have to have all this to go through. Just keep out of it. Smashing, isn't it? A lively little liberal scuffle. A nice straightforward battle between right on the left and wrong on the right. Where you can go in with fists flying and hang the consequences.

GEORGE: I know it's harder for you to see it, but . . .

BRIAN: No, I see it. A clear issue. Vermin. The Tory beast. The old ogre of intolerance as it still stalks the constituencies. That's how she fits in, that dog woman, Mrs Boothroyd.
POLLY: Brodribb.
BRIAN: A target a mile wide and all stupid. Safe enough there. George.
GEORGE: That's balls. Whoever it was it's monstrous. You can't think it's just that.
BRIAN: Not just, though that's part of it. You'd like a good fight, wouldn't you George?
GEORGE: Yes I would. It's a scandal.
BRIAN: It's a scandal. And they're pretty hard to come by, aren't they, situations where there isn't something to be said on both sides. No balance. No assessment needed. No. That's what you're missing and you'd enjoy it too much. Something really solid to fetch the phrases out, get the life-giving adrenalin flowing. Well I wouldn't waste them on me. Save them for the old age pensioners.
GEORGE: Brian.
BRIAN: No offence, George. I appreciate it. Night love. (*He kisses* POLLY. *Exits.*)
GEORGE: He's worked up about it now. I'll go after him.
POLLY: No.
GEORGE: But he's wrong. He must put up a fight about it. It's years ago. My God, if they can do that . . . he'll come round. I mean. What do you think? It's pathetic.
POLLY: There've probably been other times.
GEORGE: Have there? Not that anybody knows about. Anyway, what if there have. These days. It's nothing. Nothing. Blessington.
POLLY: Bassington.
GEORGE: I'd like an electric device to send a short sharp shock through the arses of men like that. And when was it, 1955, '56. Fifteen years ago. Five minutes with a soldier in the park. Jesus Christ. What is there in that that makes him unfit to represent the people? What next, it makes you wonder, nose picking?
(POLLY *slips out during this speech, crying.*)
'It has come to our notice that in March 1953 in the course of a week-end at the Hyde Park Hotel on three separate occasions and notwithstanding there was a lavatory only a few yards down the corridor, you nevertheless took it upon yourself to piss in the basin. This, taken in conjunction with the fact that you have frequently failed to change your underwear twice daily has raised grave doubts as to your suitability to continue to represent this constituency and the committee has therefore decided that . . .'
(*He finds he is alone. He sits down on the sofa, silent and jaded. He begins to get ready for bed. Unbuttons his shirt, puts out some of the lights. Faintly, as ever, music upstairs.* ANDY *comes in through the outside door.*)
ANDY: George.
GEORGE: Hello.
ANDY: S'Mam?
GEORGE: Bed, I think. Been out?
ANDY: Yep. Geoff go?
(GEORGE *nods.*)
Any food?
GEORGE: In the oven.
(ANDY *goes into kitchen.*)
Better turn it off. And throw away what you don't want.
ANDY: You not eating?
GEORGE: No.
ANDY: (*poised with several cartons over the waste bin*) Sure?
GEORGE: No.
(*He drops in the cartons with a thud and a shrug. This dumping must be quite explicit and pointed, dumping several cartons distinctly and separately, opening waste bin with his foot each time.*)
ANDY: S'matter?
GEORGE: Tired.
ANDY: Go to bed.
GEORGE: In a minute. She kick you out?
ANDY: Who?
GEORGE: You tell me.
ANDY: No. (*Pause*) No.
GEORGE: So.
ANDY: I went down the pub.
GEORGE: What for?
(*Pause.*)

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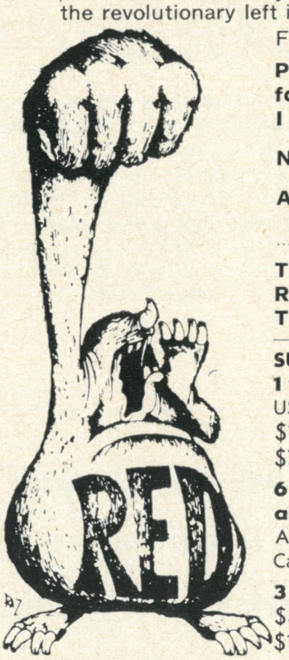

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ANDY: A drink. Two drinks. Smoke.
GEORGE: Thought you didn't go in for pubs much.
ANDY: Who?
GEORGE: You. Youth. Young people. The younger generation.
ANDY: Us.
GEORGE: Us. That's the big difference. We were never us.
ANDY: I don't feel it.
GEORGE: I didn't then. We'll go down as the last generation before the pill. Still making sly visits to back street herbalists for the tell-tale pink and purple packets. We . . . I . . . went by train to country stations, Shepreth, Melbourne, Foxton. Distance was still measured in cycle rides, not yet annihilated by the motor car. And with army appetites found out good places to eat. Good meals used to be an achievement then, good restaurants anyway. Not like now, an indulgence, an ordeal or a chore. Then. Really found reason to welcome Suez. For there we were scattered all over England and suddenly we linked hands and became a generation. By which time I was 28. Some youth.
ANDY: That's the new period in A levels. Contemporary History from Munich to Suez.
(GEORGE *laughs.*)
GEORGE: Andy.
ANDY: Yes?
GEORGE: I don't mind, you know . . . I go on at you . . . but say, if you wanted to bring anyone back here, you can.
ANDY: No.
GEORGE: You never do.
ANDY: No . . . it's . . . there's never any need.
GEORGE: I don't mind. Polly might. But it's all the same to me whatever you do, really.
ANDY: Thanks.
GEORGE: I mean, to stop if you want them to . . .
ANDY: I knew what you meant. I reckon I'm off to bed.
GEORGE: I suppose that would take some of the fun out of it. Or isn't it fun any more? I suppose you're so cool you never notice. You do have a bird?
ANDY: Sometimes.
GEORGE: That isn't what I meant.
ANDY: Isn't it? You're frightened of getting old, Dad, aren't you. Oh yes you are, Dad. You think somehow, Dad, I'm going to supply the vitality. Well I'm not, Dad. Do you know what your trouble is, Dad?
GEORGE: What's all this Dad business? What's the matter with George all of a sudden?
ANDY: You've stopped looking at things. You don't look and then alter. That's being old, Dad. Not changing any more. So do you want to know something? If you want precise information, I've never been to bed with anybody ever.
GEORGE: I'm sorry.
ANDY: Ever. Have you ever thought what's happened to all the shy people? What's become of them all of a sudden?
GEORGE: Right.
ANDY: Whatever happened to reserve, Dad, and self-consciousness? Was it your government that got rid of guilt? Tell me this, Dad. How is it easier, how is it easier to reach out and touch someone for the first time? Why is it easier for me now, than it was for you then, whenever that was? Because that's the irreducible fact. You envy me, sniffing out what I do, fishing out where I've been, trying to calculate exactly where I've got to in the sexual stakes. Well, listen, Dad, there's nothing to envy yet. You can sleep easy of a night, because I haven't even started.
GEORGE: OK, OK.
ANDY: But I tell you this, Dad . . .
(POLLY *comes down in her dressing gown with transistor.*)
When I do start, and I care, and you say things like that to me, then I shan't simply tell you to mind you own bloody business, I shall hit you.
GEORGE: Yes, you do that, *son* . . . You do that. You're the New Puritans, you lot. Get through the haze of pot and cheap fellowship and underneath you're like everybody else, harsh, censorious, bastards.
ANDY: And sometimes, Dad, keep your mouth shut. That's cool. I commend it to you.
(ANDY *goes upstairs.* GEORGE *sits for a moment on the sofa.*)
POLLY: Come on, love, I'm sorry.
GEORGE: What a foul day it's been. All in all.
POLLY: Yes. About Enid. Is she all right, do you think?
GEORGE: Enid? I don't know. I wondered. It seemed funny.
POLLY: Yes it did.
GEORGE: I can ring that doctor, if you like?
POLLY: No.
GEORGE: Her I care about, don't I?
POLLY: What? Come on, I didn't mean it.
GEORGE: Anyway, if it isn't all right, it must mean . . . there isn't anything to be done. Oh-o-oh. Feel old. And tomorrow it's the new session. A few more years in the cold. Then perhaps a minister for five years, ten if we're lucky. Then I shall be sixty and out. My name to a statue, perhaps, and that's my posterity. That and Andy.
POLLY: And James and Elizabeth.
GEORGE: I was a lackey of Transport House. The sum of a small irrelevant career in English public life in the second half of the twentieth century.
POLLY: I wonder, wherever we lived, if we'd be the same? Outside London. East Anglia, say. How do people live there?
(*Pause.*)
Or Truro.
GEORGE: (*who has slit open a postal packet containing the local paper sent him from the constituency*) Truro?
POLLY: The provinces. Anywhere. People are nicer. Better anyway. It's London that's wrong.
(*She should retrieve the string and brown paper, tidy to the last, puts it away in a drawer.*)
GEORGE: I was thinking if they'd ever have me back at Oxford we could live in the country all the time. The Cotswolds practically. A lot of them do.
POLLY: Except if we lived outside London, the provinces say, are there people like us? It might be like staying up at Cambridge during the Long Vac. Having to make do with people who were there, whether you liked them or not
GEORGE: What?
POLLY: Nothing.
GEORGE: Or just come up here at weekends.
POLLY: London. Come on up.
(POLLY *pauses with hand on light switch as* GEORGE *gets up with the local paper. He sees an item that interests him.*)
GEORGE: That's funny. Do you remember, a long time ago I had a West Indian woman who thought next door were poisoning her cats?
POLLY: No. (*Goes off.*)
GEORGE: I thought she was mad. She wasn't. They were. She's taken them to court and they've been fined.
(GEORGE *switches light off, light streams from stairs door, and he goes upstairs as the curtain comes down.*)

THE END

Faber and Faber will publish GETTING ON in cloth and paperback this Spring. Faber and Faber have also published Alan Bennett's FORTY YEARS ON — Cloth £1.10; Paperback 50p

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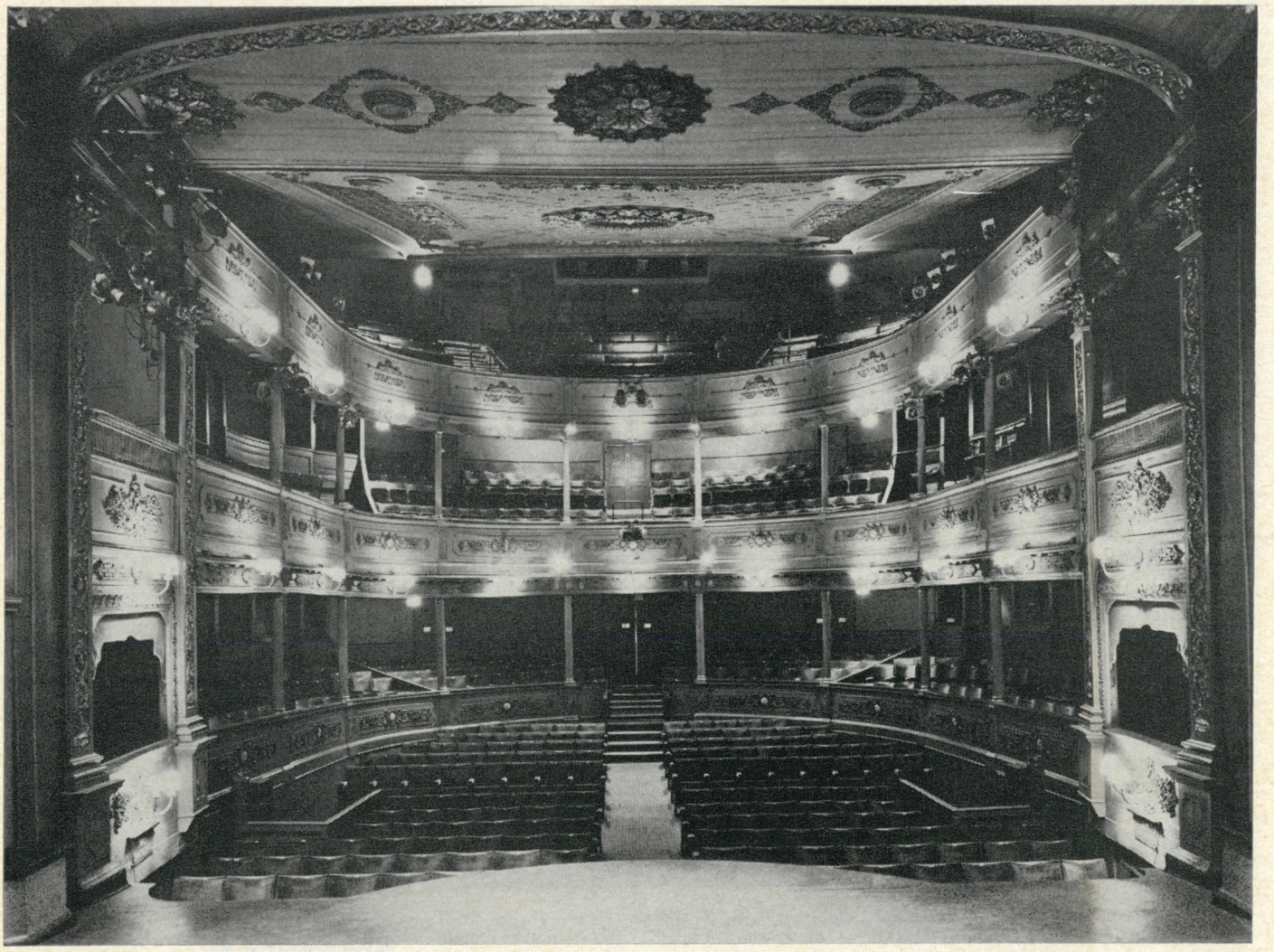


THE BRISTOL THEATRE ROYAL

Michael Anderson

THERE'S SOMETHING about Bristol's atmosphere that slows down the tempo of life in this city which, from time immemorial, has been the commercial capital of the West Country. The magnificent church of St Mary Redcliffe, its tombs and monuments all commemorating wealthy merchants, shows that Bristol has always honoured commerce as other cities have honoured nobility or culture—and today, despite a lively young population, the city as a whole retains a respect for solid, traditional bourgeois values. Trade with the Americas made it England's second city until the Industrial Revolution got under way, and the Georgian terraces of Clifton are an elegant reminder of Bristol's heyday. But much of the city's centre was flattened by bombing in the war, and building speculators are doing their best to ruin what remains. The darker aspect of Bristol's history lies in its involvement with the slave trade; nowadays the city still relies for its wealth on some of the industries set up when it was a great sea-port—tobacco, chocolate, and all that sherry—supplemented by a modern industrial complex at Avonmouth and the aircraft works at Filton. It's a city which young people find attractive and—particularly when the University's in session—there's plenty of night life.

Appropriately for a city with so much history, Bristol boasts the oldest working theatre in the country. The Theatre Royal in King Street opened in 1766 and the intimate, exquisitely proportioned auditorium is one of the most delightful surviving examples of eighteenth-century theatre architecture in Europe. Not a few theatre historians regret that the old stage and its surrounding areas have been lost in the current redevelopment. This century the Theatre Royal has gone on making history: in 1943 CEMA, the Arts Council's forerunner, acquired the lease to create the country's first state-aided theatre; in 1946 it became the home of the

Bristol Old Vic, working in loose association with the famous London company; and when in 1963 the parent company bowed out to the National Theatre a newly constituted Bristol Old Vic Trust took over the running of the Theatre Royal and the civic-owned Little Theatre, making it the first provincial company responsible for two separate theatres. Now the company is to acquire a Studio Theatre as well. Add to this the founding of the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in 1946, and the company's links with the country's first University Drama Department, and you get some idea of why Bristol ranks as a major centre of theatre in the provinces.

Val May, appointed Director in 1961, has built up an immensely loyal audience in the Theatre Royal and kept the company in the public eye with a successful series of West End transfers and international tours. Some Bristol playgoers would like to see a more adventurous repertory; with any luck, the New Vic programme in the Studio will answer their criticisms.

THEATRE CENTRE

The Coopers' Hall, an eighteenth century building adjacent to the Theatre Royal, has been acquired from the City and incorporated into the theatre complex. It provides a handsome new entrance foyer, booking hall and promenade area, together with a gallery accommodating more than 100 for concerts, recitals and exhibitions. One bar, the Macready Room, is set aside for the use of the already flourishing Playgoers' club. Inside the Theatre Royal the historic auditorium, seating 680, is unchanged, but the stage area has been completely re-designed. There's a new fly tower with a grid at 50′, vastly increased wing space behind the 25′ proscenium opening, a counterweight system and a new control room sited at the rear of the gallery. On the stage a massive 'wrap-around' cyclorama has been provided.

In the space afforded by moving the bars and foyers into the Coopers' Hall the Studio Theatre has been built. Opening in March, it'll be hexagonal in shape and completely adaptable; it seats about 200. A continuous programme of plays will be mounted, and under the banner of The New Vic the Studio will be used for a whole range of projects from day-time work with children and young people to what's called an 'exploration of the writer-actor situation' involving Charles Wood and members of the Company.

BOX OFFICE

A new Box Office (of conventional design) at street level in the Coopers' Hall serves the Theatre Royal and the Studio. Open 10 am to 8 pm (10-6 when there's no performance); telephone 0272-24388.

TIMES OF PERFORMANCE

Monday to Wednesday 7.15, Thursday to Saturday 7.45; Matinees Thursday 2.30, Saturday 3.

TICKETS

Prices have gone up: Stalls, £1.00 and £1.25; Dress Circle, £1.25, 80*p* and 65*p*; Upper Circle 65*p* and 35*p*; Gallery 35*p* and 25*p*. Matinee prices are about half the evening price. Concessions: 1 free seat per 10 for evening parties Monday-Friday; a Theatre Transport Subsidy Scheme (suspended for the Christmas production); certain seats offered at half-price to bona-fide students if unsold half an hour before the performance. Local patrons favour a complicated Season Ticket Booking System which allows you 10% off if you book on regular nights for an entire season.

Tips for visitors: avoid the cheaper, side seats in the Circles and Gallery if you can; their sight-lines were designed for an eighteenth-century forestage which long ago made way for extra rows of seating. A few seats are slightly obscured by pillars, but the Box Office always warn you of this; for my money, they're preferable to the side seats. A lot of the best seats go to the Season Ticket holders, but their bookings are all in the *first three weeks* of any production; so if it's a four week run, try for the last week.

The Studio: there'll be one overall price of admission, probably not far off the 30*p* charged for the New Vic late-night season at the Little.

PROGRAMMES

Re-designed programmes at 5*p* will offer, I'm promised, more material than the grandiose cast-lists sold before the Theatre Royal's closure.

LOOS

New and plentiful on each of the three main levels of the Coopers' Hall. The Cloakrooms, by the way, are self-service. A locking device chains your coat to the rack so that, provided you don't lose the key, you can make a quick getaway when the show's over.

COFFEE, SNACKS

Coffee served in all bars. With plenty of eating places within easy reach of the new Centre, the theatre is restricting itself to sandwiches and light snacks served in the buttery attached to the Siddons Bar.

BARS

Three, plus the Macready Room for the Theatre Club. The New Vic Bar in the basement serves the Studio; at street level the Garrick Bar caters mainly for the Stalls and Dress Circle; upstairs the Siddons Bar & Buttery, opening onto a rooftop terrace, is for the Upper Circle and Gallery. Oddly, the cheapest seats seem to get the best bar. The bars are open during normal performance hours.

PUBS

A good selection in King Street itself. Draught sherry and Berni bonhomie in the once romantic Llandoger Trow (reputedly the setting for Jim Hawkins' meeting with Long John Silver in *Treasure Island*); draught Guinness at the Naval Volunteer; occasional music at the Old Duke; a favourite with the company is The Bunch of Grapes.

EATING OUT

Bristol is much better off than most places. It's the heart of the Berni empire, of course; the nearest (and one of the better ones) is the Llandoger Trow just across the road from the Theatre Centre. Also in King Street (No 19) is a new, cheap and friendly Italian restaurant, the Trattoria da Renato, which has already won its way to the hearts of the company. Further afield, there's excellent French cuisine at the Gourmet, for about £1.50-£2.00 (43 Whiteladies Road, Tel 36230); an informal atmosphere and good, reasonably priced cooking at Floyd's Bistro in Clifton (112 Princess Victoria Street, Tel 37799); handy for a quick meal before or after the show is the Trattoria da Pietro, in a cheerful, noisy cellar opposite the main Post Office in Small Street (Tel 20848).

HOTELS

Bristol's answer to the Hilton is the Unicorn in Prince Street (294811), a lavish new establishment with its own multistorey car park and conveniently placed for the Theatre Centre—if you can afford it. Just a little cheaper are the Royal on College Green (23591) and the Grand in Broad Street (21645). Near the University and in the medium-price range are the Hawthorns (another Berni enterprise) in Woodland Road (38432) and Bright's in Elmdale Road (25563). And there are plenty of reasonably priced B & Bs in St Paul's Road, Clifton (near the Students' Union).

TRANSPORT

ROAD: By the time this goes to press, the last links in the M4 from London should be open, putting Bristol within 2½ hours' easy driving of the capital. The M5, too, now goes all the way from Bristol to the Midlands. It's an hour's journey from

Cardiff to Bristol, travelling over the spectacular Severn Bridge. Parking is unrestricted in most of the streets around the Theatre Centre after 6 pm; the nearest multistorey is the Unicorn.

RAIL: Regular hourly services from Paddington during the day; the journey takes about two hours. Not so good for getting back—no London trains between 20.15 and 03.55 (except, of course, on Sunday night, when the theatre is closed).

AIR: Regular daily flights to Lulsgate from Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester, Glasgow and Dublin. From Paris, three times weekly in winter, daily in summer.

ETCETERAS

The BOV's other theatre, the Little, is a conventional, not terribly attractive 360-seater in the same building as the Colston Hall (just off the City Centre). It has its own Resident Producer, John David; ticket prices 80*p*, 65*p*, 50*p* and 30*p* (less for matinees); performance times as for the Theatre Royal; Box Office (in the Colston Hall) 10.-8.30—Telephone 0272-21182. While the Theatre Royal reopens with *Trelawny*, it's doing *Charley's Aunt*.

FOOTNOTE

The Theatre Royal cost £5,000 to build in 1766; the Theatre Centre has eaten up £760,000 to date—and still more money has to be found to finish off the backstage area and provide all the equipment envisaged in the original scheme.

SCOTLAND — *from page 53*

Scottish writer seen the possibilities and risen to the challenge of giving them something they might actually *want* to do.? As it happens, Stewart Conn has a new play *The Burning* currently at the Edinburgh Lyceum—a worthy, above-average rep production with several good performances, but not one to set the heather on fire. It's a robust ballad-studded treatment of a sixteenth-century treason-plot-by-sorcery (against James VI as a matter of fact, and involving his cousin the 'black Earl' of Bothwell and a coven of witches) and, I should have thought, quite the right cup-of-tea for Citizens' at present.

REGIONALGUIDE

BIRMINGHAM—Repertory Theatre: *Good-Time Johnny* (James Gilbert and Julian More) to February 12. Matinees: *Noggin the Nog* (Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin) to January 15. Cannon Hill: *Once Upon A Time; The Fairy Tales of Hoffmann* (puppets) and *Rumpelstiltskin* in repertoire.

BOLTON—Octagon: *The Owl and the Pussycat Went to See . . .* (Sheila Ruskin and David Wood) to January 8.

BRIGHTON—Theatre Royal: *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens) from December 23.

BRISTOL—Bristol Old Vic, Theatre Royal: Gala reopening with *Trelawny* (Pinero/Aubrey Woods, George Rowell, Julian Slade) January 12 to February 26. Little: *Charley's Aunt* (Brandon Thomas) December 23 to February 5.

CHESTER—Gateway: *The Rise and Fall of Rumpelstiltskin* (John Kane) from December 23.

COLCHESTER—Repertory Theatre: *Beauty and the Beast*, December 21 to January 22.

COVENTRY—Belgrade: *Jack and the Beanstalk* (John Crocker).

CREWE—Crewe Theatre: *Old King Cole* (Kenneth Campbell) to January 8; *Lock Up Your Daughters* (Bart, Laurie Johnstone, Bernard Miles) January 11 to 22.

DERBY—Playhouse: *Dick Whittington* (Malcolm Sircom) December 23 to January 29.

EDINBURGH—Lyceum: *Dick Whittington*, December 23 to January 29. Traverse: *Christmas Present*, December 28 to January 16.

EXETER—Northcott: *Guys and Dolls* (Loesser/Swerling/Abe Burrows); *Happy Families* (Bernard Goss) in repertoire to January 22.

GUILDFORD—Yvonne Arnaud: *Humpty Dumpty* (Jack and Mollie Penycate and John Alldis) December 22 to January 15.

LANCASTER—Duke's Playhouse: Century Theatre: *All the World Should be Taxed* (David Pownall) December 27 to January 15. Studio: *Professor Quickety-Thinks and the Klomper King*, December 29 to January 8.

LEATHERHEAD—Thorndike: *Robinson Crusoe* (John Crocker and Eric Gilder) December 24 to January 22.

LEEDS—Playhouse: *Toad of Toad Hall* (Kenneth Grahame/A A Milne) December 22 to January 22.

LEICESTER—Phoenix: *The Plotters of Cabbage Patch Corner* (David Wood) December 20 to January 8.

LINCOLN—Theatre Royal: *Mother Goose* (Malcolm Sircom) December 27 to January 29.

LIVERPOOL—Everyman: *Simple Simon* (mats only) and *Not So Simple Simon* (eves) (C G Bond) December 26 to February 5. Playhouse: *Signpost to Murder* (Monte Doyle) December 23 to January 22. *Beauty and the Beast* (mats) December 24 to January 8, then January 12, 15, 19 and 22.

MANCHESTER—Forum: *Say Goodnight to Your Grandma* (Colin Welland) to January 8; *Billy's Wonderful Kettle* (Tony Connor) January 11 to February 5. Library: *Billy's Wonderful Kettle* to January 8.

NORTHAMPTON—Repertory Theatre: *Toad of Toad Hall* (Kenneth Grahame/A A Milne) December 27 to January 22.

OXFORD—Playhouse: *Aladdin* (Frank Hauser) to January 8.

RICHMOND, Surrey—Richmond Theatre: *Jack and the Beanstalk*, December 24 to 29.

SALISBURY—Playhouse: *Dick Whittington and his Cat*, to January 30.

SHEFFIELD—Crucible: *Peer Gynt* (Ibsen); *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (Dekker); *Treasure Island* (Stevenson/Alan Cullen) in repertoire to February 26.

WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA — Palace: *Mother Goose* (Tony Clayton) December 24 to January 22.

WORCESTER—Swan: *Flibberty and the Penguin* (David Wood) December 27 to January 15.

briefly

Light Ltd, a new company devoted to the practical design of architectural lighting, external lighting and flood lighting, has been formed by Richard Pilbrow and Tony Corbett, of Theatre Projects. Both men have been responsible for the architectural lighting of the auditorium and public areas of the new Crucible in Sheffield, of the National Theatre now being built on the South Bank, and for the auditorium lighting of the new Mercury in Colchester and the theatre for the University of Warwick.

Jane Russell plays the lead in the touring version of the American musical *Company*, which opened in New Haven last month. She has succeeded Elaine Stritch, who created the role on Broadway. Vivian Blaine is the latest actress in the role in New York.

Inter-Action, Ed Berman's theatre group, have moved into a 100-seat theatre in Rupert Street, off Shaftesbury Avenue, as a home base for their two professional companies. The building, a former bingo hall, is to be called The Almost Free Theatre. Ambiance Lunch-Hour Theatre Club and The Other Company—TOC—will operate from there, and the unique feature of the project will be that its members may determine their own membership fees and ticket prices as they enter. This 'almost free' aspect is hoped to make the theatre more available to young people.

The Prop Shop and Gallery at 51 Old Church Street, Chelsea, has recently been opened by Louis Negin, the Canadian actor-director now appearing in *The Dirtiest Show in Town*, and Charles Dunlop, the designer. The shop sells theatre props from past productions as well as making new ones to customers' orders. The gallery has original costume and set designs on exhibition, the first of which is Dierdre Clancy's for the Bond *Lear* at the Royal Court.

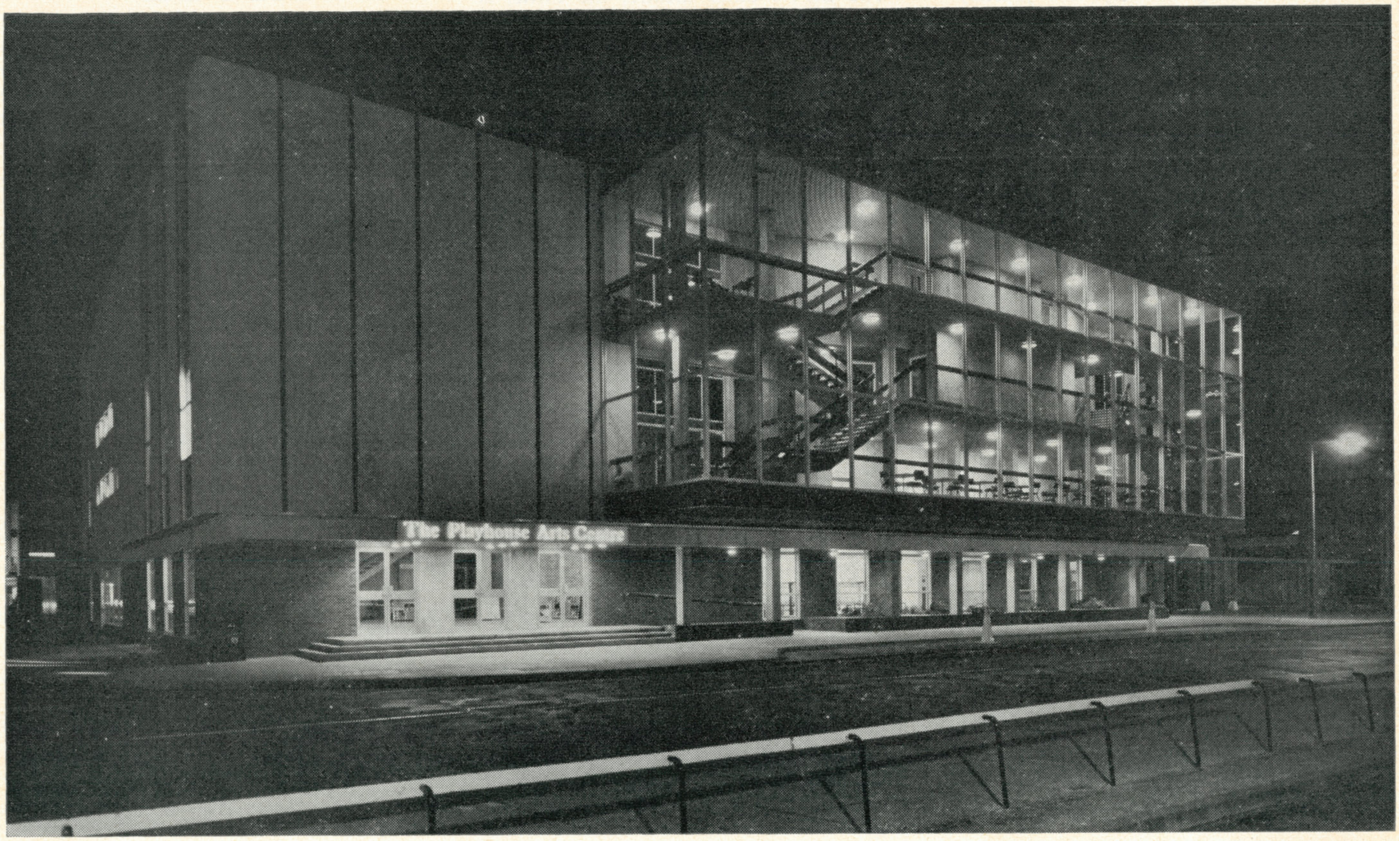
Bill Hays, Artistic Director of Leeds Playhouse since its opening in 1970, has been told by the Theatre Trust that his contract will not be renewed at the end of the current season. The theatre's financial situation is precarious and has always been so, and according to a statement issued by Hays, the Trust have had a £41,000 capital deficit since the beginning. Only seven of the original 17 members of the Trust still remain on the Board of Governors, and three have since resigned over the decision to end Hays' appointment.

The Junior Drama League, a branch of the BDL, will hold a course for young people between the ages of 12 and 19 during the Christmas holiday period. It opens at the League's headquarters in Fitzroy Square on January 3 and extends to January 7. The students, who will be divided into groups according to age and experience, will have tuition in acting, improvisation, speech and movement. The fee for the course, including a visit to a London theatre, is £3.

The Association of London Theatre Press Representatives, NATKE, and the Society of West End Theatre Managers have negotiated a new pay structure for freelance press representatives with effect from last month. It will mean an increase of minimum fees of £3 per week for the early part of a run, reducing to £2 per week for long runs, and it applies to all West End productions.

QUICK THEATRE GUIDE — No 28

BOOKING / FOOD / DRINKS / TRANSPORT / PROGRAMMES



THE PLAYHOUSE—HARLOW

Paul Hopkins

IN THE CENTRE of Harlow new town's civic square stands a Henry Moore 'Family Group'. Now the statue is pictured all over the town on the posters for the Playhouse—a symbol of artistic director Reginald Birks' intention to create a theatre attractive to all the family.

Only the determination of the sculptor that his work should remain out of doors stopped Mr Birks from moving the group into the foyer. Instead, Harlow Ballet Club dancers Anita Landa and Michael Hogan and their colleagues brought 'Family Group' and other Harlow statues to life on the stage in a ballet created for the opening season by Wayne Sleep of the Royal Ballet.

Like the waking statues in Mr Sleep's ballet, the public of Harlow and district are still rubbing their eyes and wondering if the Playhouse is real—so long has it been just a hope or a promise.

It began as a rectangle on a Harlow Development Corporation master plan for the new Harlow in the late 1940s. In 1956, a working party decided that there was enough support to justify a theatre for amateur use. A Theatre Action Committee was formed to campaign for it.

As a result, Harlow Urban District Council took up the project and council architect Terry Hinchliffe produced designs for the Playhouse. A charitable trust was set up to operate the theatre. It has a majority of councillors but also represents local arts interests.

Harlow Development Corporation promised £100,000 towards the cost, the Arts Council of Great Britain gave £47,500 and there were some smaller donations. The Urban District Council was willing to fill the gap but there was a long delay before loan sanction was finally obtained in 1968. By this time the total price was around £450,000.

Even when work began, an unexpected hurdle lay ahead. The main contractors went out of business, leaving the council to complete the building by direct labour in the nick of time for the November 1 opening.

To run the Playhouse, the Theatre Trust appointed Reginald Birks who came to Harlow from an eight-year stint in Sunderland, where he had turned a white elephant into a successful civic theatre. His problem there was that the old music hall was too large. At Harlow it may prove to be that the new theatre is too small. But for the moment, at any rate, he is pursuing the same policy of booking the top touring attractions.

He hopes to mount his own productions, too, sending them out on a tour of civic theatres. As secretary of the National Council for Civic Theatres he has the necessary contacts.

The British Film Institute, with a local advisory committee, will run films one week in four. The BFI paid for the equipment, which includes both 35mm and 16mm projectors.

And the Theatre Trust will take care that sight is not lost of the original intention to rehouse those Harlow arts activities which were already being carried on in school and community halls.

A mixed programme presents problems to those involved in getting a Playhouse 'image' over. Half-way through an opening season which included *Lulu,* Max Jaffa, the Pentangle, Prospect Productions' *King Lear,* Phoenix Opera's *Barber of Seville* and Theatre '69's *Journey's End,* members of the 2,000-strong supporters club met to elect their officers and plan activities. One of them solemnly enquired whether there was going to be 'any professional theatre here?'

The question drew laughter, gasps of surprise and a remarkably polite listing of the productions from the new theatre's artistic director. It might not seem quite so silly, however, if all the supporter knew about the Playhouse was what she could see from the street.

Not a poster or a photograph breaks the architectural purity of the front elevation. Most striking external feature is the 'glass box' upper stories of the frontage, containing the staircases to rear entrances of the auditorium. It also contains tables to which you can carry your drink or snack, and already the 'box' is a popular lunchtime rendezvous for town centre workers and students from the Technical College next door.

BOX OFFICE

BUY YOUR TICKETS over an open counter—Mr Birks wants people to feel welcome guests, not anxious suppliants for official favour, so little windows were 'out'. Opening hours are 10 am to 8 pm, telephone 027 31945. Ticket prices are usually £1, 75p and 50p, with reductions for students, children and pensioners—except on Saturdays. Junior members of the Playhouse Supporters' Club get a further 15p off live show tickets, 10p off film tickets. So far, there are no season ticket schemes or travel subsidies, but parties get reduced prices.

LOOS

THE SPACE under the rake of the auditorium, to the right as you enter the theatre, is devoted to a chain-up-your-own-coat cloakroom with loos for both sexes. There are more loos, including one for use by a handicapped person, off the bar at first-floor level (which can be reached by a lift if stairs daunt you).

BARS

THE GILBEY BAR is easy to find—straight up the main stairs from the street—but less easy to get served in, due mainly to inexperienced staff. Determined explorers may find the Club Bar (not restricted to members) up a hidden staircase from the Gilbey Bar. It's worth seeking out as the one cosy (ie wallpapered) spot in an otherwise raw-concrete-and-grey-brick building. Prices are above pub level.

MEALS

CHICKEN DRUMS (dished up in a basket) are among the tastier items on the Gilbey Bar menu, which also includes salads and good-quality sandwiches. The Club Bar will also serve you a sandwich. Opening hours are 10 am to 4 pm and 6 pm to 11 pm. Midnight once a licence has been secured. The restaurant, seating 80, is on the ground floor, entrance to the right of the main stairs. It offers table d'hote lunches and dinners starting at 50p and an a la carte menu. Telephone table bookings to 027 31945. Supper licence. (Outside the theatre the choice of eating and drinking is minimal. The only town centre pub, the Painted Lady, is just off the market square. It serves lunches but not dinners. Two Chinese restaurants, next to the local Odeon and at the bus station, are the only late eating places.)

MAIN AUDITORIUM

MOST PEOPLE try to get into the auditorium through one door from the bar, but there are six other ways in. Apart from a two-row gallery over the projection box, all the seats are in one steep tier, but a curious arrangement of steps and levels breaks them up and creates the impression from the stage that there are people sitting right up the side walls. Leg room is inadequate in many seats.

Two blocks of side seats wrap round the thrust stage, which is enormous and well-served with concealed entrances at its front edge. It proved ideal for Prospect's *King Lear.* It can be cleared away, however, and front stalls exposed.

An awkward orchestra pit on two levels is one major undesirable design item, but there is nothing at all wrong with the proscenium stage. The opening is adjustable from 28 to 42 feet, the total width 71 feet and the depth 30 feet, while a shutter can be lifted to allow of setting right to the back of the workshop, a total depth of 51 feet! There are full flying facilities.

The workshop space, paint frame, wardrobe and dressing room provision are all on the lavish side. Lighting is concealed in the auditorium ceiling and walls and controlled from the rear of the stalls.

Seating capacity varies according to the arrangement of the stage, but is just over 400 in most forms.

STUDIO

FOR 'MINORITY' EVENTS, there is a top-floor studio theatre, which seats 128 'in the round'. By day it is a ballet studio and rehearsal room, the seats being 'flown' on their rostrums to clear a floor space the same size as the theatre's main stage.

Opening productions upstairs include Beckett's *Endgame,* given two lunchtime performances by Prospect Productions and sold out, and a local history programme *The Essex Hundreds,* compiled and acted by Harlow people and already seen in stately homes and elsewhere throughout the county.

PROGRAMMES

CONVENTIONAL PATTERN, contracted out. Informative about the current week's attractions, but giving the barest possible details of forthcoming events. 5p.

PARKING

LITERALLY THOUSANDS of spaces on car parks in front of the theatre (put 5p in a slot to get out) or behind the Technical College (free). You can park in the streets around the theatre—but leave your lights on or risk a fine.

TRANSPORT

MOST PERFORMANCES begin at 8 pm. Electric trains on the Liverpool Street-Bishop's Stortford line take 45 minutes from London, calling at Harlow Town (a bus or taxi ride from the theatre). Last train to London leaves at 11.47 pm.

THE COST

IF YOU ARE WONDERING how it is possible to make a 400-seater theatre offering such a varied programme pay, the answer is 'It won't'. In addition to meeting the debt charges of £30,000 a year, Harlow Urban District Council is giving a £30,000-a-year subsidy towards running costs. So far, the Arts Council's contribution in this direction has been a less-than-generous £2,500. Still, the current show should be making a profit in a town with as many children as Harlow. It is the grand family group pantomime *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*!

NEXT MONTH*

Hugh Leonard at
A Long Day's Journey
Into Night

Mary Holland at
The Good-Natured Man

Stanley Price at
Charley's Aunt

Catharine Hughes in New York

A Complete Playtext

** a fallible guide to next month's P & P*

DIRECTION & DESIGN — *from page* 29

when we get there,' you've got to budget for problems.

WATERHOUSE: *The basis of this set, the tracking, was fairly expensive, though*?

DEXTER: The tracking was the biggest single item in the set but not expensive by, say, West End standards. You take X number of pounds that you would normally spend on a lot of flats and that goes down under the stage; the budget itself is quite moderate.

WATERHOUSE: *When did you call in the engineering consultants*?

DEXTER: We established with the model that the principle worked and then went to the consultants, who agreed it was possible.

DUDLEY: There were two prototypes. With the first one I realised that we needed a superb piece of engineering because tolerances are very slender. This has given us the smoothness that we had today.

DEXTER: To have got through today and have done three major scene changes with actors and found only one squeak is remarkable. Anything else that bumped was the actors. There will be another squeak when we get to the Vic because there always is. This set moves at its own natural speed, so it's much easier in rehearsal to build up a rhythm.

DUDLEY: Apart from the two trucks which are winched we are entirely independent of mechanics. And the sounds are all live.

DEXTER: Somebody blows the posthorn, the horseshoes are good old coconuts and not on tape, the musical quartet at the end is made up of actors and others. This lot are very skilled at busking their way along, and most of them can sing because they've been through *Tyger*. I find these days that one of my first questions to actors is 'Can you sing?' Those who can are able to count, and if they can count they can act. If an actor *can* sing, he's usually a bit fuller as an actor. It's like being able to move well—gymnastics or dance. One of the healthiest developments at the moment is that actors are getting more capable of the physical demands like dancing, singing . . .

DUDLEY: Changing sets . . .

WATERHOUSE: *Changing sex*?

DEXTER: That as well.

WATERHOUSE: *There are a lot of productions around at the moment with singing. Isn't it a fad*?

DEXTER: Not at all. Singing has always been part of theatre; Shakespeare is full of song. You were expected in his company to sing, and he used to write very good lyrics for you. It's part of what your tumbler was expected to do and it was a very sad period when they didn't do it. That was the sensational thing about all Joan Littlewood's productions, the way she made people sing. It's part of the total experience.

NEW YORK — *from page* 37

Spender lines are dutifully spoken—but it does indeed seem a duty

What emotion there is seems, to say the least, overdone, as Salome Jens permits volume and on occasion stridency to substitute for passion, with hardly a variation from first to last. Nancy Marchand's Elizabeth is authoritative and at times impressive and Philip Bosco and Stephen Elliott perform ably as Leicester and Burleigh. But it is simply not enough; the production itself is stillborn.

Athol Fugard's *People Are Living There,* given its American premiere in the Forum, is far better as a production, if much less worth doing as a play. It lacks the individuality and distinctive South African quality of Fugard's earlier works (*The Blood Knot, Hello and Goodbye, Boesman and Lena*), replacing them with a 'universality' that is, alas, sadly lacking in originality or distinction.

It is Milly's (Estelle Parsons) fiftieth birthday and life is passing her by. The man to whom she has devoted ten years of her life has found someone else; the pleasures of the past seem past indeed. 'Once upon a time there was a little girl in a white dress full of hope,' she muses, 'and now there isn't.' After fifty years of life and who knows how many more to come, she is tortured by the thought that, as one of the two young boarders at her birthday party tells her, one day you are no longer there and no one misses you.

In her fevered attempt to recapture living instead of simple life she and her guests (Leonard Frey and Peter Rogan) lacerate each other beyond the point of no return, turning her shabby Johannesburg kitchen into a battleground for frustrations and failed hopes. But as the earlier imposed gaiety of the party gives way to reality, Mr Fugard has nothing to offer beyond what we have long since grown used to hearing: that life is lonely, possessed of only fleeting joys and our dreams are doomed to thwarting. Despite persuasive performances throughout and the sensitive staging of John Berry, it never becomes much more than a static and uninspired evening.

I like my nostalgia as well as anyone, and I'd expected to feel awash and aglow with it at *On the Town,* the revival of the 1944 Betty Comden-Adolph Green-Leonard Bernstein hit about the adventures of three sailors in New York on a twenty-four hour shore leave. Perhaps it's simply too early (or could it be too late?) to go back to those wartime years with their forever departed mixture of brashness and innocence. Or—and I think this is more likely—perhaps it's simply that *On the Town* may not have been quite so good as it was thought to be in the first place. Either way, something —other than Jerome Robbins' highly regarded 1944 choreography—is clearly missing.

That it is has nothing to do with the performances or the elaborateness of the production, and with the scarcity of commercial hits this season, it probably will pack them in for months to come. From the moment the three sailors appear in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, through their pursuit of 'Miss Turnstiles', with diversions by way of anthropologist Claire and Hildy, the Rosie-the-Riveter-type taxi driver, the cast does everything that possibly could be expected and sometimes an unnecessary bit more. The sets are lavish and ingenious, the costumes brightly exaggerated and Ron Fields' staging energetic and at times resourceful. But something's gone amiss and I think a large part of the problem lies with Bernstein's music. With two or three exceptions—'New York, New York' and perhaps 'Lonely Town' and 'Lucky to Be Me'—the score seems remarkably undistinguished. Given the acknowledged slimness of the Comden and Green book, it's hard to see how the result could today seem more than moderately entertaining. I wish it had been even that a little more consistently.

Oh, yes, I should mention that among the season's successes there is a new Neil Simon, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue,* a comedy about the trials of being a New Yorker. By virtue of assorted complications (otherwise known as press agents), I will have to report on it next month. There is no doubt it will be running.

NEW BOOKS — *from page* 8

'which has become obsessed with the limitations and inadequacies of speech'.

It has always seemed puzzling that English academics, even in drama departments, have shown such a lack of interest in theatre. This has never been true on the continent or in such institutions as the Yale Drama Department in the States. But if *Butley* is a sign of the academic as well as the theatrical times then perhaps it is time to reconsider his peculiar malaise—the fact that the subject he is teaching has nothing whatever to do with the society in which he is living. Well, a production like the Brook *Dream,* so scorned by the editor of *Shakespeare Survey,* has everything to do with that society. And I begin to wonder if our professors are as confident now, as they were a few years back in Cambridge, that the very worst way of treating our greatest dramatist is also, in part, to regard him as a contemporary.

PETER ANSORGE

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